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THE TUTORIAL HISTORY

OF

ENGLISH LITERATURE

BY

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PREFACE.

The common complaint against smaller text-books of literature is that they include too much, and fail to preserve due proportion between the greater and the lesser writers. In this book the lesser writers are mentioned, if at all, only incidentally; and the attempt has been made, in passing from one great writer to another, to give the *history*, as distinguished from the mere *story*, of English literature—to lay bare some of the more important aspects of the work of each author selected, while tracing the lines of development from writer to writer—in a word, to make an elementary book scientific, as far as the methods of science are applicable. In this task I have had no model before me to improve upon, and am more painfully aware, than any friendly reader or critic can be, of shortcomings in its execution. In particular I have felt the difficulty of being consistent in difficulty: of avoiding the opposite dangers of 'talking over people's heads' and childish simplicity. The former danger may be largely obviated if the student, before perusing each chapter, will read the English Classics recommended on pp. ix-xi.

I take to myself, without his leave or knowledge, the satisfaction of associating with this little work the name of the living critic and historian of literature to whom it and I owe most in the way of suggestion and stimulus, that of Professor Herford of Aberystwyth.

A. J. W.

CAMBRIDGE,
JULY 1900.

PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION.

To this edition a chapter by Mr. H. Clay, B A. Oxon, on the literature of the Victorian era has been added Thanks are due to Messrs. Macmillan and Co. for their kind permission to quote from Matthew Arnold's Preface to Ward's *English Poets* the passage given on page 268.

CAMBRIDGE,
SEPT. 1909.

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TO THE READER.

ENGLISH CLASSICS.

For the full benefit derivable from the study of this book it must be preceded by the reading of one work by each of the authors dealt with. If that is not possible, at least one complete work representative of each period must be read For this purpose the following classics are recommended.

Ch. i. *Beowulf.*

" ii. Chaucer's *Prologue* and *Knight's Tale.*
Langland's *Piers Plowman* (B. Prologue and Passus V.).

" iii. Malory's *Morte Darthur* (selection).

" iv. Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus.*
Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost, Romeo and Juliet, Henry V., As You Like It, Julius Caesar, Hamlet,* and *Tempest.*
Jonson's *Epicene.*

" v. Spenser's *Faery Queene I.*
Milton's *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, Paradise Lost I. and II.*
Bacon's *Essays.*

" vi Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel.*
Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress.*

Ch. vii. Pope's *Essay on Criticism, Epistle to Arbuthnot, Epistle to Augustus.*
Swift's *Gulliver's Travels.*
Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe.*
Addison's *Sir Roger de Coverley.*[1]

" viii. Thomson's *Winter.*
Richardson's *Clarissa* (abridged).
Fielding's *Tom Jones.*
Collins's *Poems.*
Gray's *Poems.*
Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (selection).
Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* and *Vicar of Wakefield.*
Burke's *Two Speeches on America.*
Cowper's *Poems* and *Letters* (Golden Treasury).

" ix. Wordsworth's *Poems* (Golden Treasury).
Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner.*
Byron's *Poems* (Golden Treasury).
Shelley's *Poems* (Golden Treasury).
Scott's *Legend of Montrose, Ivanhoe, Quentin Durward*
Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* and *Essays* (selection).

" x. Tennyson's *Ulysses, Locksley Hall, English Idylls, In Memoriam, Idylls of the King* (Macmillan, Globe).
Browning's *Dramatic Lyrics, Pippa Passes, Men and Women, The Ring and the Book* (Oxford Poets).
Arnold's *Poems, Essays in Criticism.*
Swinburne's *Atalanta in Caledon, Poems and Ballads.*

[1] Macmillan, 1s. 9d.

Ch. x. Morris's *Defence of Guenevere, Earthly Paradise.*

Dickens' *David Copperfield, Tale of Two Cities, Pickwick Papers, Dombey and Son.*

Thackeray's *Vanity Fair, The Newcomes, Esmond.*

G. Eliot's *Mill on the Floss, Adam Bede, Middlemarch.*

C. Bronte's *Jane Eyre, Shirley.*

Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies, Frondes Agrestes, Stones of Venice.*

Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus, History of the French Revolution.*

Macaulay's *Essays, History of England.*

TUTORIAL HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE.

CHAPTER I.

BEFORE THE CONQUEST (1066 A.D.).

Introductory

ENGLISH literature is the greatest that the world has ever seen, and the language in which it is written bids fair to be some day the universal language. Such facts as these make it right to approach its history in a spirit of reverence. It is hardly possible to exaggerate or overestimate the greatness of this literature of ours. It is not merely that in every kind of writing it challenges comparison with the best of any and every other country; but that, whereas almost every other literature has had one or two great epochs, ours has had at the very least five, and shows a lasting vitality that is quite without parallel. If the last of these great literary epochs may be said to have closed somewhere about 1870, the first came to an end somewhere about 870—not less than one thousand years before. There are some people who have lately been kind enough to recognise the existence of Chaucer and his poetry, but to whom the unfortunate term 'Anglo-Saxon' suggests only the curious, the ludicrous, not to say the contemptible. What is in reality our glory becomes their shame. The half-amused, half-contemptuous ignorance of the whole of our literature before Chaucer on the part of the great majority of readers renders it necessary to make a few plain statements of undeniable facts: that the earliest English

poetry and the earliest English prose alike belong to a time when no other nation of modern Europe had either a vernacular poetry or a vernacular prose; that the best of this poetry and the best of this prose have some qualities of real greatness, and cannot fail to interest every earnest reader; and that English literature, like the English language, is from the earliest to the latest times one and indivisible. It has been stated by one recent historian that 'the poetry of Chaucer has no connection with the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons.' It would be equally true to say that the waters of the Thames have no connection with the waters of the Isis. But insistence on the essential oneness of the stream of English literature need not render us blind to the importance of the contributory streams, nor to the fact that in particular the poetry of old English needed to be blended with that of a more advanced civilisation, and finally emerged all the stronger and better therefor.

Language and Versification.

The transcription of a few lines (translated on p. 6) of poetry will furnish the text for a few remarks on our language and versification before the Conquest.

> *Æ*fter þǣm *w*órdum *W*éder-Gēata lḗod
> *é*fste mid *é*lne, nalas *ó*ndswáre,
> *b*ī́dan wólde; *b*rím-wylm onfḗng
> *h*ílde-rínce. Ðā wæs *h*wī́l dǽges,
> ǽr hē þone *g*rúnd-wong on*g*ȳ́tan méhte.

It will probably be obvious to every reader that we have here a highly inflected language, and moreover one that already merits the encomium passed upon it by Sir Philip Sidney many centuries later: 'and is particularly happy in compositions of two or three words together, which is one of the greatest beauties that can be in a language.' The fullness of inflection hampered versification as much as the ready formation of compounds adorned the language.

If attention be now directed to the metre, several inferences will be drawn with little difficulty. It will be seen

(1) that the long lines are divided into half-lines by a strongly-marked medial pause; (2) that the two halves of a long line are bound together by alliteration, either consonantal or vocal (the alliterative letters are italicised above); (3) that in each half-line there are two accented syllables, which may be singled out by the alliteration (for the alliterative syllables are always accented) and by rhetorical emphasis, and a varying number of unaccented syllables; (4) and, in a word, that the versification is based on alliteration and accent, and is therefore rhythmical, not syllabic. Before the Conquest traces of rime are but rarely met with.

Some characteristics of Old English poetry.

The division of long lines into half-lines must have favoured the extended use of another characteristic feature of old English poetry, and of immature poetry in general—parallelism. A thought expressed in one half-line is frequently repeated in other words once or even twice in the succeeding half-lines. An old English poem can rarely run on for twenty lines without a parallelism, and it is obvious that this must impede its narrative power. There is a certain tendency, even in narrative poems which have plenty of life and movement on the whole, for the current to move in eddies and backwaters, for the action to go back now and again on itself; really rapid movement is hardly ever found. Yet it is wonderful how little the best heroic, martial, or elegiac verse appears to be hampered by these drawbacks. To compensate for them it has an extensive vocabulary of picturesque diction and an abundance of telling metaphors. Its marked preference for metaphors over similes is nearly all in its favour.

It is the especial purpose of this chapter to tell only so much (or rather so little) of the story of our earliest literature as is necessary for the understanding of what follows. Its poetry is mainly epic, elegiac, or religious. The father of our religious poetry is Cædmon (late seventh century), the cowherd who became a monk under Hild, abbess of Whitby, and with whose name are associated the Old English 'Genesis,' 'Exodus,' 'Daniel,' and 'Christ and Satan.' It is more than possible that Milton had these poems

translated to him by his friend 'Junius,' who was their first editor. In elegiac poetry there have come down to us, among others, 'Deor,' 'The Wanderer,' 'The Seafarer,' and 'The Ruin,' which are all fine poetry; indeed one of the greatest poets and critics of the nineteenth century was of opinion that 'The Wanderer' is not surpassable in its kind. In martial poetry, we have 'Judith' (a fragment), 'The Battle of Maldon,' and 'The Battle of Brunanburh.'

The 'Saxon Chronicle'

The last-named poem is, together with a few others of less worth, in the 'Saxon Chronicle,' the greatest monument of Old English prose, and a monument too to the self-sacrificing devotion and fostering care of the greatest of Englishmen, Alfred the Great. The 'Chronicle' consists mainly of a long series of prose annals, extending from the landing of Julius Caesar to the death of Stephen. The earlier annals were compiled later, and then inserted in their place; but from about 800 A.D. the entries are contemporary with the events they describe, and thus form a priceless body of historical material. During the Danish wars of Alfred's reign the narrative becomes spirited, graphic, infused with patriotic spirit. Here is a literal translation of a short extract from the annal for 894 A.D., a time when no other European nation had an historical prose at all, to show how venerable is the pedigree of English prose:

'Then marched they thereto, and put the Danish host to flight, and stormed the camp, and took all that therewithin was, both in money, and in women, and also in bairns, and brought all into London; and all the ships they either broke up or burnt up, or brought to London or to Rochester; and Haesten's wife and his two sons one brought to the king, and he gave them back to him, because one of them was his godson, the other alderman Ethelred's.'

'Beowulf.'

But the great and lasting glory of our earliest literature is in the epic. It is certain, from the few fragments we possess, that some almost entire Old English epics of noble proportions have perished. But one complete poem of over three thousand long lines survives—'Beowulf,' which has a far better title than any

other poem to be regarded as the national English epic. It refers to historical events that occurred about 520 A.D. But the main body of the poem is mythical, and in all probability it grew, like the true epic, with the growth of our race. We have space here only for a brief summary of its 'fable,' and for a quotation from a modern poetical rendering.

Hrothgar, king of the Danes, with whose ancestry the poem opens, in the pride of his success in war builds a great hall, Heorot, for feasting and the giving of treasure. But a monster named Grendel, enraged by the daily sounds of revelry, attacks the hall, makes a meal of fifteen thanes, and carries off fifteen more, returning with similar intent the next night. Thus Heorot is deserted, and remains so for twelve years. Then Beowulf, a mighty warrior of the Geats famous for the strength of his grip, hearing of Grendel's ravages crosses the sea with fourteen comrades, keeps watch in Heorot, and, after seeing one of his men killed and eaten, grapples with the monster and pulls off his whole arm. Grendel escapes to his haunts, and dies. The following night, when the Danes are again in possession of the hall and Beowulf is lodged elsewhere, Grendel's mother breaks in, and revenges the death of her son by slaying Æschere, a noble Dane. Beowulf undertakes the pursuit and revenge; he tracks the she-monster to her lair in the bottom of a mere, and slays her there. Seeing Grendel's corpse, he severs the head from the body, and bears it back with him in triumph to Hrothgar's court. Loaded with rich gifts, the hero returns to his own land, and recites his adventures to Hygelac, his uncle, the king of the Geats. On the death of the latter, Beowulf refuses the throne for himself, and acts as guardian and adviser to the young king Heardred, who is, however, slain in battle. Then Beowulf becomes king of the Geats, whom he rules wisely for fifty years, until a dragon begins to lay waste the land. The old hero's spirit is undaunted as ever, but deserted by all his chosen warriors save one, although he succeeds in quelling the fiery 'drake,' he himself meets with his death in the terrible encounter. With the burning of his body the poem ends.

Beowulf and Grendel's Mother.[1]

'So after these words the Weder-Geats' chieftain
With might of heart hasten'd; nor for answer then would he
Aught tarry; the sea-welter straightway took hold on
The warrior of men: wore the while of a daytide
Or ever the ground-plain might he set eyes on.
Soon did she find, she who the flood-ring
Sword-ravening had held for an hundred of seasons,
Greedy and grim, that there one man of grooms
The abode of the alien-wights sought from above;
Then toward him she grasp'd and gat hold on the warrior
With fell clutch, but no sooner she scathed withinward
The hale body; rings from withoutward it warded,
That she could in no wise the war-skin clutch through,
The fast locked limb-sark, with fingers all loathly.
So bare then that sea-wolf when she came unto bottom
The king of the rings to the court-hall adown
In such wise that he might not, though hard-moody was he,
Be wielding of weapons. But many of wonders
In sea-swimming swink'd him, and many a sea-deer
With his war-tusks was breaking his sark of the battle;
The fell wights him follow'd. 'Twas then the earl found it
That in foe-hall there was he, I wot not of which,
Where never the water might scathe him a whit,
Nor because of the roof-hall might reach to him there
The fear-grip of the flood Now fire-light he saw,
The bleak beam forsooth all brightly a-shining.
Then the good one, he saw the wolf of the ground,
The mere-wife the mighty, and main onset made he
With his battle-bill; never his hand withheld sword-swing,
So that there on her head sang the ring-sword forsooth
The song of war greedy. But then found the guest
That the beam of the battle would bite not therewith,
Or scathe life at all, but there failed the edge
The king in his need. It had ere thol'd a many
Of meetings of hand; oft it sheared the helm,
The host-rail of the fey one; and then was the first time
For that treasure dear lov'd that its might lay a-low.

[1] Ll 1492-1556 of the 'Story of Beowulf,' done out of the Old English tongue by William Morris and A. J. Wyatt (Longmans, 6s.).

But therewithal steadfast, naught sluggish of valour,
All mindful of high deeds was Hygelac's kinsman.
Cast then the wounded blade bound with the gem-stones
The warrior all angry, that it lay on the earth there,
Stiff-wrought and steel-edged. In strength now he trusted,
The hard hand-grip of might and main ; so shall a man do
When he in the war-tide yet looketh to winning
The praise that is longsome, nor aught for life careth.
Then fast by the shoulder, of the feud nothing recking,
The lord of the War-Geats clutch'd Grendel's mother,
Cast down the battle-hard, bollen with anger,
That foe of the life, till she bow'd to the floor ;
But swiftly to him gave she back the hand-guerdon
With hand-graspings grim, and griped against him ;
Then mood-weary stumbled the strongest of warriors,
The foot-kemp, until that adown there he fell.
Then she sat on the hall-guest and tugg'd out her sax,
The broad and brown-edged, to wreak her her son,
Her offspring her own. But lay yet on his shoulder
The breast-net well braided, the berg of his life,
That 'gainst point and 'gainst edge the entrance withstood.
Gone amiss then forsooth had been Ecgtheow's son
Underneath the wide ground there, the kemp of the Geats,
Save to him his war-byrny had fram'd him a help,
The hard host-net ; and save that the Lord God the Holy
Had wielded the war-gain, the Lord the All-wise ;
Save that the skies' Ruler had rightwisely doom'd it
All easily. Sithence he stood up again.'

CHAPTER II.

FROM THE CONQUEST TO CHAUCER (1066-1400 A.D.).

It has been said that up to the tenth century English was before all other European vernaculars in its achievements alike in poetry and in prose. From the Conquest until the close of the thirteenth century French literature went ahead of ours in almost every department; then, with Dante (d. 1321), Petrarch (d. 1374), and Boccaccio (d. 1375), Italian literature obtained the supremacy, which was, however, brought back to England by Chaucer in the last quarter of the fourteenth century. After his death there came a prolonged period of dearth that can be compared only to the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a dearth that must be attributed to the stupendous changes taking place in all the departments that may be said to environ and influence letters. But, with Shakespeare and his contemporaries, England regained the supreme place, not only in comparison with contemporary literatures, not only in comparison with all other modern literatures, not only for that age,—but gained and permanently retained a place in universal literature, that is, in every department, either unequaled or unsurpassed.

Changes after the Conquest.

The two great periods of dearth in the story of English letters admit of a rational explanation. In each instance momentous changes were taking place, which must necessarily have had a deadening influence upon authorship. These changes may be called respectively, the change from early to medieval, or, from 'Old' to 'Middle,' and from medieval to modern. In each case the change extended to language, metre, subject-matter, and spirit. If the earlier period of dearth

was the longer, it was because the changes 'in the nature of things' were complicated and intensified in England by the disturbing effects of the Norman Conquest. Some of these effects have probably been exaggerated; changes in the language, such as the decay of inflection, in any case inevitable, have at times been laid solely at the door of the Conquest, which in reality at most hastened them. And indeed there was no need for exaggeration. Attempt for a moment to conceive what its effects must have been. A nation became supreme in State and in Church which, though originally of the same kin as ourselves, had come under the influence of Latin civilisation and refinement and had become, to many intents, a Latin race. The ruling classes in England for three centuries employed a different idiom; used, when they wrote, an entirely different system of versification, based upon syllables instead of upon beats; centred their thoughts upon a whole new range of topics; and were people of a temperament as diverse from that of the typical Saxon, as the typical Frenchman of to-day differs from the typical German. Roll these last two into one and you will have something not utterly unlike Chaucer; perhaps too the same suggestion may go no little way towards explaining the greatness of our language and of our race.

For three centuries, then, the struggle between the two races, their languages and literatures, went on, and finally resulted in a compromise, or rather an amalgamation. In language, English won, but accepted thousands of words from Norman and continental French; in metre, French won, though for a long time traces of the Old English system remained in occasional alliteration and outbreaks of accentual rhythm. After the Conquest Old English literature died a rapid death: nothing henceforward was written in the old metre that could by any possibility be called Old English poetry; and when the Peterborough manuscript of the 'Chronicle,' which brings the narrative down three quarters of a century later than any other, ceases in 1154 A.D., its language must be called 'transitional.' For the sake of showing the changes that had already taken place, we transcribe here a short extract (to be

compared with the Old English quoted on p. 2) from the annal of 1137 A.D., with its translation:

'Wes næure gæt mare wreccehed on land. ne næure hethen men werse ne diden þan hi diden. for ouer sithon ne forbaren hi neither circe ne cyrce-iærd. oc namen al þe god þæt þar-inne was. and brenden sythen þe cyrce and al te gædere. Ne hi ne forbaren biscopes land ne abbotes ne preostes. ac ræueden munekes and clerekes. and æuric man other þe ouer myhte. Gif twa men oþer iii coman ridend to an tun. al þe tunscipe flugæn for heom. wenden þæt hi wæron ræueres. Þe biscopes and lered men heom cursede æure. oc was heom naht þar of. for hi uueron al forcursæd and forsuoren and forloren.'[1]

Poetry from 1200 A.D. to Chaucer.

The 'Chronicle' alone demands mention between 1066 and 1200 A.D. During the hundred and fifty years from 1200 A.D. to Chaucer, while prose pursued the even tenor of its way, poetry showed two developments of very marked interest, the first international or European, the second English and national. For it must be understood that the great proportion of the literature of the Middle Ages was common, in greater or less degree, to all the civilised countries of Europe. In prose, this was the case until we come to the fifteenth century; in poetry, English numbers developed some originality of theme and treatment towards the close of the thirteenth century, and this original element increased enormously in the latter half especially of the fourteenth century. Of the universal poetry the chief kind was the romance, the direct source of which is Geoffrey of Monmouth's Latin 'Historia Regum Britanniæ' (*circ.* 1140). From Geoffrey Wace took the materials of his Anglo-Norman 'Brut,' adding the institution of the Round Table, and from Wace Layamon, of Arley on the Severn, about the beginning of the thirteenth century, took his English 'Brut.' Layamon, however, added so much new material that he doubled the length of the poem.

[1] 'Never yet was greater wretchedness in the land, nor ever did the heathen men worse than they did; for nowhere afterwards did they spare either church or churchyard, but took all the wealth that was therein, and afterwards burnt the church and all together Nor did they spare bishop's land, nor abbot's, nor priest's, but plundered monks and clerks, and every man another wherever he could. If two or three men came riding to a town, all the township fled before them, supposed that they were robbers. The bishops and clergy ever cursed them, but that was naught to them, for they were all accursed and forsworn and reprobate.'

This 'Brut' of Layamon is the first English romance after 'Beowulf,' and is thus the ancestor of the long line which includes 'Havelok,' 'King Horn', and the cycles of Arthur, Charlemagne, Alexander, and Troy. Though many of the English romances were concerned with national subjects and heroes, and drew upon native materials, they seem in the great majority of instances to have been translated from the French. In French, after Wace, the prose Arthurian romances anticipated the verse forms; but in England the development of a fit prose was much later (fifteenth century), and the verse forms were therefore the earlier. On the whole the earliest romances are the best. With the increase in length and in number the quality deteriorated, so that already by about 1390 Chaucer thought them a fit subject for burlesque in his Rime of Sir Thopas ('Canterbury Tales,' B. 1902-2108). The following short extract is from Layamon's 'Brut':

'Þis iherde Uortiger, of alchen uuele he wes war,
& seide hit an Bruttisc, ne cuðe he nan Ænglisc:
"Maiden Rouwenne, drinc bluðeliche þenne."
Þat maide dronc up þat win, & lette don oðer þer-in,
& bi-tæhten þan kinge, & þrien hine custe;
& þurh þaelke leoden þa laȝen comen to þissen londe,
wæs-hail & drinc-hæil; moni mon þer-of is fain.'[1]

About 1275 English poetry begins to strike out a new national path of its own in its political songs. 'Rude and imperfect as is the vehicle of expression,' says Courthope, 'the popular songs of England in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries reveal a consciousness of united purpose and a corporate pride in the nation, for which no contemporary parallel can be found in any other country of Europe.' These songs are an expression of the same spirit which has ever since placed England in the vanguard in the fight for liberty. Of the two following illustrations, the occasion of the first is Edward II.'s violation of a charter, upon which two wise men comment; that of the second, by our first 'jingo' poet, is

[1] 'Vortigern heard this—of every evil he was aware—and said it in British (he knew no English): "Maiden Rowena, drink blithely then" The maid drank up the wine, and had other put therein and handed to the king, and kissed him thrice; and through those same people those customs came to this land, wassail and drink-hail, many a one is glad thereof.'

Edward III.'s march through Normandy before the battle of Crécy :

'The firste seide, "I understonde
Ne may no king wel ben in londe
Under God Almihte,
But he cun himself rede
How he shall in londe lede
Everi man wið righte.
For miht is right,
Liht is niht,
And fiht is fliht.
For miht is riht, the lond is laweles,
For niht is liht, the lond is loreles,
For fiht is fliht, the lond is nameless.'
That other seid a word ful god,
"Whoso roweth aȝein the flod,
Of sorwe he shal drinke ;
Also it fareth bi the unsele,
A man shal have litel hele
That agein to swinke.
Nu on is two,
Another (And wel ?) is wo,
And frend is fo
For on is two, that lond is streintheles ;
For wel is wo, the lond is reutheles ,
For friend is fo, the lond is loveles "'[1]

'Merlin said thus with his mouth,
Out of the north into the south
Suld cum a bare [boar = Edward III] over the se,
That suld mak many man to fle ;
And in the se, he said ful right,
Suld he schew ful mekill might ;
And in France he suld bigin,
To mak tham wrath that er tharein,
Untill the se his taile reche sale [shall reach],
All folk o France to mekill bale.
Thus have I mater for to make,
For a noble prince sake ;
Help me, God, my wit es thin ;
Now Laurence Minot will bigin.'

[1] The first said, 'I understand that no king may be prosperous in his land under God Almighty unless he can counsel himself how to lead every man in the land with justice. For might is right, light is night, fight is flight. Because might is right, the land is without law; because night is light, the land is without learning ; because fight is flight, the land is without honour.' The next said a very good word : 'Whoso rows against the stream he shall drink of sorrow. So it fares with the unfortunate ; a man shall have little remedy by striving against it Now one is two, well is woe, friend is foe. Because one is two, the land is without strength; because well is woe, the land is without pity ; because friend is foe, the land is without love.'—Wright, *Political Songs*, p. 254.

Middle English Prose.

Middle English prose before Wyclif and Malory is respectable, but rather common-place and undistinguished in consequence of its comparative neglect. Religion is to some extent the bane of medieval literature; for religious themes, through their very familiarity, require a freshness of handling that is too rarely conspicuous by its presence. Even in poetry the religious section, with its legends of saints, Bible narratives, paraphrases and homilies in verse, bulks most largely of all; it almost monopolises prose. In the 'Ancren Riwle,' or Anchoresses' Rule, of the early thirteenth century, however, though entirely a religious work, we find many a passage that even now makes its appeal direct to our hearts by its homeliness, its unconscious humour, or its genuine fervour. This last characteristic may be illustrated by the following extract from the address of Christ to the soul, which is given in modern form because of the difficulties of the southern dialect:

'Thy love, says the Lord, is either to be given freely, or it is to be sold, or stolen, or taken away by force. If it is to be given, where canst thou better bestow it than upon me? Am I not the fairest thing? Am I not the richest king? Am I not of the highest lineage? Am I not the most courteous of men? Am I not the most liberal of men? Am I not of all things the sweetest? If thy love is not to be given, but thou wilt by all means that it be bought, say how: either with other love or with somewhat else? One rightly sells love for love, and thus love ought to be sold, and for nothing else. If thy love is to be sold, I have bought it with love above all other. And if thou sayest that thou wilt not value it so cheaply, but thou wilt have yet more, name what it shall be; set a price upon thy love. Thou shalt not say so much, that I will not give thee much more for thy love. Wilt thou have castles and kingdoms? Wilt thou rule all the world? I will do better for thee. I will make thee, with all this, queen of heaven.'

'Roman de la Rose.'

Before passing to Chaucer, a word has to be said about the two chief foreign influences that played upon his work, the 'Roman de la Rose' and the early Italian Renaissance. All authorities are agreed as to the importance of the 'Roman de la Rose' for the understanding of later medieval literature. One says: that

for two hundred years at least after 'it was written hardly anybody wrote a love poem in England or France which was not in some degree its offspring.' Another says: 'Whoever wishes to understand the spirit of the great majority of poems written in England between the reigns of Edward III. and Henry VIII. must first make the acquaintance of the "Romaunt of the Rose."' The first four thousand lines (roughly) were written by Guillaume de Lorris (d. 1260) as a poem of chivalry, chiefly remarkable because it is the first poem in any country which, throwing aside the themes of war and heroism, turned to the new theme of Love and treated it in the new mode of Allegory. The last eighteen thousand lines are the work of Jean de Meung (d. 1320), who, while ostensibly continuing the allegory of his predecessor, in reality introduced an entirely different spirit into the work, making the allegory a mere cloak to enfold the telling of stories and political and moral satire. Thus this wonderful poem cleaves the Middle Ages, marking off the delicacy and mysticism of feudal chivalry from the powerful study of nature and men and actual life that we find in the earlier Renaissance. This poem Chaucer tells us that he translated; and it will not be very far from the truth if we say that in his early poems he resembles Guillaume de Lorris, and in his later and greater poems Jean de Meung. But there is one other poet (and prose writer) whose influence, in these later poems, competes with that of 'limping' Jean, and that is

Boccaccio.

Boccaccio—whom yet Chaucer never mentions by name. 'Dante takes for his province the drama of the human soul in its widest scope; Petrarch takes the heart of an individual man, himself. Boccaccio takes the complex stuff of daily life, the "quicquid agunt homines" of common experience. These are their several subjects. Out of them Dante creates the epic, Petrarch the lyric, Boccaccio the novel.' In his creation, in English poetry, of the 'tale in verse,' told for its own sake, not merely to point a moral, and told with consummate art, Chaucer owes much to Boccaccio, whom, however, he surpasses as easily in verse as the Italian surpasses him in prose narrative.

This brings us then to the first great master of English song. Geoffrey Chaucer was the son of a London vintner, who was himself in 1338 in attendance upon the king and queen: in this way, no doubt, a courtly career was opened up for the poet. The scope of this work leaves no space for biographical details which are not in their nature or effects also literary. Let it suffice then to say that in the ten years from 1359 to 1369 Chaucer was engaged in the service of the court with intervals of campaigning; that in the ten years from 1370 onwards he was frequently engaged on diplomatic and commercial missions abroad; that from 1374 to 1391 he was more or less engrossed in official life at the Customs, as Clerk of the King's Works, as a Knight of the Shire for Kent; that in 1373, when Petrarch (whom he probably saw) and Boccaccio were still living, and again in 1378, he visited Italy on diplomatic missions; that in spite of all pressure from outside work, from which indeed he was largely relieved by permission to discharge his duties by deputy, he was deep in the labours of authorship from 1380 onwards; and that in 1386 the series of apparently unmerited misfortunes began, which reduced him by 1391 to a state of constant pecuniary embarrassment. The accession, in 1399, of the son of his old patron, John of Gaunt, brought with it an additional pension of forty marks a year; the easement came none too soon, for the poet died the following year. He was buried in Westminster Abbey.

Chaucer, 1339(?)-1400.

His Life

In one passage in his poetry Chaucer refers to himself by his surname and in another by his Christian name; in three other passages he makes detailed references to his person, tastes, and habits. In the 'House of Fame' an eagle swoops down on the poet and bears him towards the stars, and in the delightful conversation which ensues between them Chaucer reveals himself more intimately to us than he does anywhere else:

Personal references in his poetry.

'Thus I longe in his clawes lay,
Til at the laste he to me spak
In mannes vois, and seyde, "Awak!

And be not so agast, for shame!"
And called me tho by my name.
And, for I sholde the bet abreyde—
Me mette—"Awak," to me he [the eagle] seyde,
Right in the same vois and stevene
That useth oon I coude nevene;
And with that vois, soth for to sayn,
My minde cam to me agayn;
For hit was goodly seyd to me,
So nas hit never wont to be. . . .
And sayde twyës "Seynte Marie!
Thou art noyous for to carie." . . .
"O god," thoughte I, "that madest kinde,
Shal I non other weyes dye?
Wher Ioves wol me stellifye,
Or what thing may this signifye?
I neither am Enok, nor Elye,
Ne Romulus, ne Ganymede
That was y-bore up, as men rede,
To hevene with dan Iupiter,
And maad the goddes boteler." . . .
"Thou demest of thy-self amis;
For Ioves is not ther-aboute—
I dar wel putte thee out of doute—
To make of thee as yet a sterre . . .
Ioves halt hit greet humblesse
And vertu eek, that thou wolt make
A-night ful ofte thyn heed to ake,
In thy studie so thou wrytest. . . .
But of thy verray neyghebores,
That dwellen almost at thy dores,
Thou herest neither that ne this,
For whan thy labour doon al is,
And hast y-maad thy rekeninges,
In stede of reste and newe thinges,
Thou gost hoom to thy hous anoon,
And, also domb as any stoon,
Thou sittest at another boke,
Til fully daswed is thy loke,
And livest thus as an hermyte,
Although thyn abstinence is lyte' (between ll 554 and 660).

The second passage is in the famous Prologue to the 'Legend of Good Women':

'And, as for me, though that my wit be lyte,
On bokes for to rede I me delyte,
And in myn herte have hem in reverence;
And to hem yeve swich lust and swich credence,

That ther is wel unethe game noon
That from my bokes make me to goon,
But hit be other up-on the haly-day,
Or elles in the Ioly tyme of May;
Whan that I here the smale foules singe,
And that the floures ginne for to springe,
Farwel my studie, as lasting that sesoun!' (ll. 29—39).

The last passage in the order of their composition is in the 'Canterbury Tales' (B. 1881-94); it gives us a humorous description of the poet as he is supposed to have appeared to 'our Host':

'Whan seyd was al this miracle, every man
As sobre was that wonder was to se,
Til that our hoste Iapen tho bigan,
And than at erst he loked up-on me,
And seyde thus, "what man artow?" quod he,
"Thou lokest as thou woldest finde an hare,
For ever up-on the grounde I see thee stare.

Approche neer, and loke up merily.
Nor war yow, sirs, and lat this man have place;
He in the waast is shape as wel as I;
This were a popet in an arm tenbrace
For any womman smal and fair of face.
He semeth elvish by his contenaunce,
For unto no wight dooth he daliaunce."'

Again, in three other passages Chaucer refers to his own writings, and the quotation of one of these will fittingly introduce a list of his chief works:

List of his works.

'Thou hast translated the Romauns of the Rose . . .
Hast thou nat mad in English eek the book
How that Crisseyde Troilus forsook? . . .

He made the book that hight the Hous of Fame,
And eek the Deeth of Blaunche the Duchesse,
And the Parlement of Foules, as I gesse,
And al the love of Palamon and Arcyte
Of Thebes, thogh the story is knowen lyte;
And many an ympne for your halydayes,
That highten Balades, Roundels, Virelayes;
And, for to speke of other besinesse,
He hath in prose translated Boëce
And of the Wreched Engendring of Mankinde,
As man may in pope Innocent y-finde;
And mad the Lyf also of seynt Cecyle;

He made also, goon sithen a greet whyl,
Origenes upon the Maudeleyne;
Him oghte now to have the lesse peyne;
He hath mad many a lay and many a thing.'

In the following list all the works mentioned above are included, but only the most important of the rest. They are divided into three periods of authorship. The first period is that of translation, also called the French period; it ends about the time of Chaucer's return from his second visit to Italy in 1378. Up to this time he had been largely a translator of works from French and Latin. The second period is that of imitation, also called the Italian period, because at that time the influence of the great Italian poets of the century is most marked in Chaucer's poetry. It may be dated 1379-85. The third period is that of invention, or the original period, dating from 1386 to his death.

(1) *Period of Translation* (-1378): 'Origenes upon the Maudeleyne'—lost; 'The Wreched Engendring of Mankinde'—lost; 'Romaunt of the Rose'—octosyllabic verse—lost (ll. 1-1705 of the extant version may be by Chaucer); 'Book of the Duchess, or Death of Blanche,' 1369—octosyllabics; 'Life of Saint Cecyle' (= 'Second Nun's Tale')—Chaucer's stanza; 'Palamon and Arcite' (= 'Knight's Tale')—heroic couplets.

(2) *Period of Imitation* (1379-85): 'Translation of Boethius'—prose; 'Troilus and Cressida'—Chaucer's stanza; 'Parliament of Fowls' 1382—Chaucer's stanza; 'House of Fame,' 1384—octosyllabics—unfinished; 'Legend of Good Women,' 1384—heroic couplets—unfinished.

(3) *Original Period* (1386-1400): 'Canterbury Tales'—chiefly heroic couplets and Chaucer's stanza—unfinished.

Among the minor poems, not included above, one of the best is 'Truth'; it is not too long for quotation in full:

'Flee fro the prees, and dwelle with sothfastnesse,
Suffice thee thy good, tho hit be smal;
For hord hath hate, and climbing tickelnesse,
Prees hath envye, and wele blent overal;
Savour no more than thee bihove shal,
Werk wel thy-self, that other folk canst rede;
And trouthe thee shal delivere, hit is no drede.

Tempest thee noght al croked to redresse,
In trust of hir that turneth as a bal:
Gret reste stant in litel besinesse;
And eek bewar to sporne ageyn an al;
Stryve noght, as doth the crokke with the wal.
Daunte thy-self, that dauntest otheres dede;
And trouthe thee shal delivere, hit is no drede.

That thee is sent, receyve in buxumnesse,
The wrastling for this worlde axeth a fal.
Her nis non hoom, her nis but wildernesse:
Forth, pilgrim, forth! Forth, beste, out of thy stal.
Know thy contree, look up, thank God of al;
Hold the hye wey, and lat thy gost thee lede:
And trouthe thee shal delivere, hit is no drede.

ENVOY.

Therefore, thou vache, leve thyn old wrecchednesse
Unto the worlde; leve now to be thral;
Crye him mercy, that of his hy goodnesse
Made thee of noght, and in especial
Draw unto him, and pray in general
For thee, and eek for other, hevenlich mede;
And trouthe thee shal delivere, hit is no drede.'

The first two periods

Only the faintest idea of the extent, variety, merit, and music of Chaucer's poetry can be gathered from the foregoing list of his works. His first period of experiments we may leave out of account; it is fairly represented by the 'Book of the Duchess.' His second period is again a period of experiments, some of which, however, come very near to being masterpieces. 'Troilus and Cressida' is a great poem of over eight thousand lines; and though it purports to be a translation of Boccaccio's 'Filostrato,' fully two-thirds of its *lines* are original. It is the greatest achievement of the second period; the 'Parliament of Fowls' and the 'House of Fame' belong, like the 'Book of the Duchess,' to the school of Guillaume de Lorris, the school of dream and allegory. The 'Legend of Good Women' belongs even more to that school than the 'House of Fame,' which was written partly under the influence of Dante; but the original Prologue of the 'Legend' may be selected ('Troilus and Cressida' being too long) to represent the second period on account of its intrinsic

merits and for the light it throws upon the problems and difficulties of Chaucer's career as a poetic artist. In all we possess about thirty-five works from his pen, and it is clear from his own references to them that many 'Balades, Reundels, Virelayes' must have been lost.

'The Canterbury Tales.'

If of all these the 'Canterbury Tales' alone had come down to us, Chaucer's fame would not have been seriously affected, for in them we have him incomparably at his greatest and best. While increasing his renown as already established by his earlier works, the 'Tales' of themselves add three entirely new storeys to the house of the poet's fame, of only one of which, without them, should we have had even the scaffolding. In the first place the fiction of a pilgrimage to Canterbury, which he invented as the framework of his tales, and which he sustains in the links between the tales with infinite resource of incident and conversation, is immensely superior to every earlier device of the same kind and has never been surpassed; for it has the supreme merit of collecting all sorts and conditions of men and women for a purpose for which they must often have united in that day, and thus of securing as great a variety of tellers as the poet's genius for story-telling was varied. Secondly, there is the character-painting of the immortal Prologue. Of all the character-writers in English literature from Ben Jonson to Wordsworth none is so great as Chaucer. 'I see all the pilgrims in the "Canterbury Tales,"' says Dryden, 'their humours, their features, and the very dress, as distinctly as if I had supped with them at the Tabard in Southwark. . . . He must have been a man of a most wonderful comprehensive nature, because he has taken into the compass of his "Canterbury Tales" the very manners and humours (as we now call them) of the whole English nation in his age. Not a single character has escaped him.' In proof that there is no exaggeration in this encomium we quote the character of the Pardoner:

'With hym ther rood a gentil Pardoner
Of Rouncivale, his freend and his compeer,
That straight was comen fro the court of Rome.

Ful loude he song, "Com hider, lové to me."
This Somonour bar to hym a stiff burdoun,
Was nevere trompe of half so greet a soun.
This Pardoner hadde heer as yelow as wex,
But smothe it heeng, as dooth a strike of flex;
By ounces henge hiss lokkès that he hadde,
And therwith he hise shuldres overspradde,
But thynne it lay by colpons oon and oon;
But hood, for jolitee ne wered he noon,
For it was trussed up in his walet.
Hym thoughte he rood al of the newe jot;
Dischevelee, save his cappe, he rood al bare.
Swiche glarynge eyen hadde he as an hare
A vernycle hadde he sowed upon his cappe;
His walet lay biforn hym in his lappe
Bret-ful of pardon, come from Rome all hoot.
A voys he hadde as smal as hath a goot;
No berd hadde he, ne nevere sholde have,
As smothe it was as it were late shave,
I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
But of his craft, fro Berwyk unto Ware
Ne was ther swich another pardoner,
For in his male he hadde a pilwe-beer,
Which that, he seyde, was oure lady veyl;
He seyde he hadde a gobet of the seyl
That Seint Peter hadde whan that he wente
Upon the see, til Jhesu Christ hym hente.
He hadde a croys of latoun ful of stones,
And in a glas he haddé pigges bones.
But with thise relikes, whan that he fond
A povre person dwellyng upon lond,
Upon a day he gat hym moore moneye
Than that the person gat in monthès tweye;
And thus with feyned flaterye and japes
He made the person and the peple hys apes.
But, trewëly to tellen atte laste,
He was in chirche a noble ecclesiaste;
Wel koude he rede a lessoun or a storie,
But alderbest he song an offertorie,
For wel he wiste, whan that song was songe,
He moste preche and wel affile his tonge
To wynne silver, as he ful wel koude,
Therefore he song the murierly and loude.'

Thirdly, Chaucer is our greatest story-teller in verse. There is no more possibility of disputing this fact than there is of proving it here. The 'Tales' must be read,

and happy is he who still has that roll to unfold. All that can be done here is to tell in briefest summary the 'Story of Constance' or the 'Man of Law's Tale.'

'The Story of Constance.'

Part I. Syrian merchants come to Rome and hear 'the excellent renoun' of the Emperor's daughter Constance. Their description of her on their return inflames the heart of the Sultan of Syria, and he says he must have her to wife even at the price of apostasy. By the Pope's mediation matters are so arranged. Constance leaves Rome for her new home with forebodings. The Sultan's mother calls her council together and they swear to do her bidding. She pretends to the Sultan to abjure her faith, and invites the Christians to a feast when they shall arrive.

Part II. The Christians arrive and are royally welcomed. At the old Sultaness's feast, every Christian and every converted Syrian, including the Sultan, is slain, and Constance is set afloat in a rudderless boat with her jewels, clothes, and victuals. After more than three years at sea she is driven ashore in Northumbria. The constable of the place takes her home, and she converts his wife Hermengyld, and then himself, to Christianity. A knight, with whom Constance refuses to commit sin, revenges himself by slaying Hermengyld in her sleep in the constable's absence, and laying the bloody knife by Constance's side. The constable returns with the king, Alla, and all the court bears witness in Constance's favour except the knight, who swears on a holy 'Briton book' that she is guilty. Immediately he falls to the earth and his eyes burst out of his head. Alla has him slain, and marries Constance, to the intense chagrin of his mother Donegild. In his absence, during a war with Scotland, a boy is born to him, but his mother alters the despatches so that he is informed of the birth of a monster; but he replies 'Keep the Child.' Donegild, however, again tampers with the letter, and the constable receives command to cast Constance and her son adrift in the old boat. The command is reluctantly obeyed.

Part III. When Alla returns he is overcome with grief, and tracing the crime to Donegild's door he slays her.

Constance is driven hither and thither on the sea for five years or more, and is then picked up by a Roman senator as he is returning from Syria, after taking vengeance for the perfidy of the Sultaness in the slaughter of the Christians. Meanwhile Alla, stricken with penitence for the murder of his mother, comes to Rome to obtain absolution. The senator, with whose wife Constance is now living (she has always maintained complete silence as to her history), goes to dine with Alla, and takes with him Constance's son Maurice. Alla inquires his history, suspects that it is his own son, and asks to see the mother; thus husband and wife are brought together again and all the past is explained.

'Whan Alla saugh his wyf, faire he hire grette,
And weep that it was routhe for to see;
For at the firste look he on hire sette,
He knew wel verraily that it was she;
And she for sorwe as doumb stant as a tree;
So was hir herte shet in hir distresse
When she remembred his unkyndenesse.

Twyes she swowned in his owene sighte.
He weep, and hym excuseth pitously:
"Now God," quod he, "and alle hise halwës brighte
So wisly on my soul as have mercy,
That of youre harm as giltelees am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk your face;
Elles the feend me fecche out of this place!"

Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne,
Er that hir woful hertes mighte cesse;
Greet was the pitee for to heere hem pleyne,
Thurgh whiche pleintes gan hir wo encresse.
I pray yow all my labour to relesse;
I may nat tell hir wo until to-morwe,
I am so wery for to speke of sorwe.

But finally, whan that the sothe is wist,
That Alla gilteless was of hir wo,
I trowe an hundred tymës been they kist;
And swich a blisse is ther bitwix hem two,
That, save the joye that lasteth everemo,
Ther is noon lyk that any creature
Hath seyn, or shal, whil that the world may dure.'

Constance makes herself known to her father the Emperor, and in due time returns to England with her husband.

But their bliss is short-lived; Alla dies in a year, and Constance returns to end her days at Rome. Maurice succeeds his grandfather.

Chaucer's services to English literature can hardly be over-estimated. He actually did for our versification what Johnson wrongly claimed to have been done for English poetry by Dryden: 'He found it brick and left it marble.' The easy flow and wondrous melody of his verse can be duly appreciated only by comparison with the work of his predecessors. But his chief claim to the gratitude of posterity has yet to be named: his discovery that 'to make the best of nature, and not to grope vaguely after something better than nature, was the true office of art.' Ruskin speaks of the 'necessity to all high imagination that it should paint straight from life.' As Chaucer's genius developed it felt this necessity more and more, until it finally broke with allegory, and painted for us in immortal colours actual contemporary life and human nature. When the truth of this principle in art, of the direct imitation of nature, was realised, 'it was rapidly developed in other European countries, by Ariosto, by Cervantes, by Molière; but to Chaucer must be assigned the honour of having led the way.'

Chaucer's services to literature.

Although Chaucer must be allowed, in this little book, to stand for the second great age in English literature, the fourteenth century, one of his contemporaries, the author of 'Piers Plowman,' is too important to be passed over without mention. In almost all respects he is the complete antithesis of his greater comrade; he might be described by saying that what Chaucer is not, that Langland is. The physical proportions of the two men are significant of much in their poetry: the spare gaunt 'long' Will Langland; the studious 'elvish' courtier, 'shape in the waast as wel as' our host of the Tabard. 'Chaucer describes the rich much more fully than the poor, and shows the holiday-making, cheerful, genial phase of English life; but Langland pictures the homely poor in their ill-fed, hard-working condition, battling against hunger, famine,

Langland.

injustice, oppression, and all the stern realities and hardships that tried them as gold is tried in the fire. Chaucer's satire often raises a good-humoured laugh; but Langland's is that of a man who is constrained to speak out all the bitter truth, and it is as earnest as the cry of an injured man who appeals to heaven for redress.' For his particular purposes and the class of hearers he wished to reach, Langland revived the Old English alliterative and accentual metre, and gave it such vogue that for a time it seemed to challenge the supremacy of the Chaucerian iambic. Chaucer abandoned allegory; it is essential to Langland's art. Moreover, Langland actually used allegory in the 'direct imitation of nature,' by making his allegorical figures realistic, life-like human types. He is the ancestor of Bunyan, to whom, among English allegorists, he makes a splendid second. Finally, as Chaucer is the ancestor of the long line of poets and singers of which Tennyson is the greatest representative in the nineteenth century, Langland is the parent of the long line of bards and seers that has for the present ended in Browning. It is the 'seer' in Langland that speaks in the following prediction of the 'good time coming,' to the weird music of which our unaccustomed ears can hardly yet be insensible:

'Shal no Mede be maister · nevere more after,
Ac [1] love and louhnesse [2] . and leaute [3] to-gederes
Shullen be maistres on molde [4] · trewe men to helpe . . .
Ac kynde love shal come yut · and conscience to-gederes,
And make of lawe a laborer · suche love shal aryse,
And such pees among the puple · and a parfit treuthe
That Iewes shal wene in here witt · and wexe so glade,
That here kyng be ycome · fro the court of hevene,
Moyses other [5] Messias · that men be so trewe.
For alle that bereth baselardes [6] · bryght swerde, other launce,
Axe, other acchett · other eny kynne wepne, [7]
Shal be demed to the deth · bote yf he do hit smythie [8]
In-to sykel other into sithe · to shar [9] other to culter; [10]
Ech man to pleye with a plouh · a pycoyse other a spade,
Spynnen, and spek of God · and spille no tyme.'

[1] But.
[2] Lowliness
[3] Loyalty.
[4] Earth.
[5] Or.
[6] Daggers.
[7] Any kind of weapon.
[8] Unless he have it smithied.
[9] Share.
[10] Coulter.

CHAPTER III.

FROM MEDIEVAL TO MODERN (1400—1579 A.D.).

GREAT poets, apart from the few who may be called universal, may be divided into two classes according as they express and interpret the age in which they live, or anticipate the thoughts, feelings, and problems of an age to come. To the former class belong Chaucer, Pope, Dryden, Tennyson; to the latter, Collins, Shelley, Browning. But though in many ways Chaucer admirably expressed his age, yet in his conception of the poetic art and its relation to life, as well as in his actual achievements, he left it far behind. His genius carried him so far towards the modern spirit in literature that *his successors spent a whole century panting and toiling after him in vain.* His actual achievements were not equalled for fully two hundred years; but even his poetic standpoint was not attained by his successors for at least a century and a quarter. This is the only great Sahara in our literature for the majority of readers—for whom English poetry begins with Chaucer.

The Fifteenth Century

Matthew Arnold calls the eighteenth century 'excellent and indispensable'; the fifteenth century is equally excellent and indispensable in its way. A time when such stupendous changes were taking place proved too much for the measure of talent possessed by Lydgate and his contemporaries; they had not the genius to attune their muse to the changed and changing conditions, and so they fell back into medievalism. The living spirit of literature gave place to a mere literary tradition; and lifeless imitations masqueraded in the worn-out garbs of allegory and romance. The last fifty years of the century are almost entirely destitute of poetry.

And what were these 'stupendous changes'? In the first place, the final disinflection of the language. In Chaucer's day inflections had practically been reduced to three, *-e*, *-es*, *-en*, of which he had made the fullest use in his careful system of prosody. By 1400 flectional *-e* was dead as a separate syllable, and *-en* was rapidly following it. This fact Chaucer's successors would not or could not face, and the consequence was the partial ruin of their versification. Their constant imitation of him only made matters worse; for whereas his final syllabic *-e* followed the laws of etymology, theirs was a mere metrical convenience. They seem to have felt in a helpless way that their lot was cast in an evil time for versifiers, for they lament their own ineptitude in such lines as these of Lydgate's:

A Century of great Changes

> 'And trouthe of metre I sette also a-syde,
> For of that art I had as tho no guyde
> Me to reduce, when I went a-wronge:
> I tooke none hede nouther of shorte nor longe.'

But the disinflection of the language was only one symptom or feature of the mighty transition from the medieval to the modern world, which was gradually taking place throughout this century, and of which the death of feudalism and feudal chivalry, the lessening power of the monarchy, the growing power of the people, and the rise of the 'nation of shopkeepers,' are manifestations. The old political and social order was changing, giving place to new. Old subjects were played out, the new were not yet ready, and there was no great seer to anticipate them.

The best poetry of the fifteenth century is represented by the works of Lydgate, the voluminous and versatile monk of Bury St. Edmunds; by the 'King's Quair' (Book) of James I. of Scotland, who was captured by an English ship in 1406, and who in 1423 saw from his prison window at Windsor the lady 'who became successively the inspiration of his verse, the means of his liberation, and the partner of his throne'; and by the work of the Dunfermline schoolmaster, Robert Henryson, 'Chaucer's aptest and brightest scholar.'

Fifteenth Century Poetry.

Of these three Henryson touches the highest mark; his 'Moral Fables' are the best political apologues in the language; even a French critic, Jusserand, admits that 'the story of the "uplandis Mous and the burges Mous" has never been better told than by Henryson, and this can be affirmed without forgetting La Fontaine.' From it the following extract is taken:

'"Wer I in-to the kith (home) that I come fra,
For weill nor wo suld never cum agane"
With that scho tuke hir leif and furth can ga,
Quhylis (whiles) throw the corne and quhylis throw the plane.
Quhen scho wes furth and fre scho wes ful fane,
And merilie merkit (hastened) unto the mure.
I can nocht tell how efterwart scho fure (fared),

But I hard say sho passit to hir den
Als warme als woll, suppose (although) it wes nocht greit,
Full benely (abundantly) stuffit, baith but and ben (outer and inner room),
Of beinis and nuttis, peis, ry, and quheit (wheat);
Quhen-ever scho list scho had aneuch to eit
In quyet and eis (ease), withoutin ony dreid;
Bot to hir sisteris feist na mair scho yeid (went).

. . . .

Blissit be sempill lyfe withoutin dreid!
Blissit be sober feist in quyetie!
Quha hes aneuch, of na mair hes he neid,
Thocht it be lytill in-to quantitie.
Greit abondance and blind prosperitie
Ofttymes makis ane evill conclusioun.
The sweitest lyfe thairfor in this cuntrie
Is sickernes (security), with small possessioun.'

Fifteenth Century Prose.

Hitherto prose had been left hopelessly in the lurch through the enormous advance recorded in the poetry of Chaucer; in this century prose made up some leeway. It is hardly too much to say that Malory did for English prose what Chaucer had done for English poetry. Yet we know practically nothing about the author of the 'Morte Darthur,' printed by Caxton in 1485, beyond the information contained in the closing words of his book: 'this book was ended the ninth year of the reign of King Edward the Fourth by Sir Thomas Maleore, knight, as Jesu help him for his great might, as he is the servant of Jesu both day and

night.' Malory's 'Morte Darthur' has been called by one critic 'the great prose achievement of the whole time before the "Advancement of Learning"'; by another, 'the only Arthurian epic our literature has to show.' It is indeed a very great work. Its chief sources and models were the early French prose romances of the twelfth or thirteenth century, the finest of all medieval prose; apart from the allowance to be made in favour of the French versions on account of priority of date, Malory has nothing to fear from a comparison with them. To some ears there has been no prose more finely written ever since. The Elizabethans possibly might have equalled it, had the conditions been favourable; but they were not, as we shall see. Who can be insensible to the music of such a passage as the farewell of Sir Launcelot and Guenever?

'And therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection, I must needs take me to perfection of right. For I take record of God, in you I have had mine earthly joy. And if I had found you now so disposed, I had cast me to have had you into mine own realm. But sithen I find you thus disposed, I ensure you faithfully I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if that I may find any hermit either grey or white that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me, and never no more. Nay, said the queen, that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works. And they departed. But there was never so hard an hearted man, but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made. For there was lamentation as they had been stung with spears, and many times they swooned. And the ladies bare the queen to her chamber, and Sir Launcelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all that night in a forest, weeping.'

How did it come about that such fine prose as this was succeeded in the next century by the 'mental Latin' of Elyot and Ascham? It was due to the Renaissance. And this leads to the further remark, that all the influences which helped to mould and form our noble Elizabethan literature may be seen in germ in the fifteenth century: the Renaissance, translation, printing, the Reformation, discoveries. About each of these a word must be said here.

The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.

The Renaissance, or the Revival of Learning, or the New Learning, may be explained as the revived influence of the great Greek and Latin classics upon modern thought and literature. It is convenient to distinguish the Earlier Renaissance of the fourteenth century, which we may associate with the names of Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and in some degree with that of Chaucer; and the Later Renaissance, which dates from the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453, and the consequent dispersal of learned Greeks through civilised and friendly Europe. Thus the Later Renaissance was especially Greek. The influence of the New Learning was not at first beneficial on the whole; writers were overladen with their new acquisitions, and did not know what to do with them (for example, among the personages introduced into Douglas's 'Palace of Honour' are Enoch, Melchizedek, Deborah, Solomon, Job, Odysseus, Aristotle, Catiline, Cicero, and Virgil, and the scheme of redemption is expounded by a nymph in Calliope's train); classical allusions were scattered broadcast; and generally there was a danger of English spelling, diction, syntax, versification, style, and drama, being overlaid and undermined with 'classicism.' Of this wide and far-reaching movement translation may be regarded as one *modus operandi*, although translations were, of course, made from French, Italian, and Spanish, as well as from Latin and Greek. To connect this feature with the fifteenth century it is sufficient to mention the rendering of Cicero's 'De Amicitia,' by John Tiptoft, Earl of Worcester (before 1475).

The Renaissance.

The invention of printing from movable founts was in itself a social and literary revolution. Previously reading had been the luxury of the few, for manuscripts were scarce and precious. Even the library of a man like Chaucer must have been quite small. But after the first book 'enprynted by me william Caxton, at westmestre,' in 1477, every year saw a large increase in the number of readers, and books and pamphlets came to be written and printed even for the class who had never before come within the charmed circle except under the

Printing.

spell of the wandering minstrel. How this fact reacted upon literature, popularising it at times to debasement and at times to a noble simplicity, but on the whole enlarging its bounds and widening its influence, the student must be left to follow out for himself. One incidental effect of the introduction of printing should not be overlooked: compositors are intensely conservative, much more so even than scribes; from the first they have ill brooked any interference with English spelling, and the result has been disastrous: while English sounds have changed greatly since the fifteenth century, there has been no corresponding change in their symbols, which are still to all intents those of that century petrified.

The Reformation is usually dated from Luther, but he must be blind indeed who does not see its seeds in Langland, Wyclif, Huss, Savonarola (burnt 1498). It led to a further increase in the number of writers and readers, and to a certain facility in composition that was not an unmixed boon; but above all it produced models of magnificent prose in the English Scriptures and in such works as Foxe's 'Acts and Monuments.'

Lastly, the spirit of discovery was abroad, acting as a new stimulus upon the minds of men. The famous voyages of Columbus, Sebastian Cabot, and Vasco da Gama, all between 1490 and 1500, turned the thoughts of men to larger views of the physical universe, and brought into English life and letters the spirit of adventure that breathes through many of the best works of 'the spacious times of great Elizabeth.'

Such then, in very brief, is the character of the fifteenth century. The first four-fifths of the sixteenth are one long preparation for Spenser. Much had to be done before Spenser and Marlowe were possible. Much was done at the beginning of the century by two Scots poets, William Dunbar, and Gawain Douglas. The former revived the sound Chaucerian tradition of the direct imitation of nature, though he is at times purposely and inartistically coarse. The latter did work of greater historic moment in his translation of the 'Aeneid,' the first rendering of any Latin or Greek classic into

Dunbar and Douglas.

English verse. *Of equal importance are the original prologues, some of which contain descriptions of Nature that* make Douglas the ancestor of the school of Nature poets of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One thing alone prevents these men from receiving their due meed of popular appreciation to-day—a dialect that is painfully slow reading to anyone but a born Scot. How Douglas's verse moves at its best will be seen in the following lines in praise of spring:

'Welcum, the lord of lycht and lamp of day!
Welcum, fostyr of tendir herbys grene!
Welcum, quyknar of florist flowris schene!
Welcum, support of euery rute and vane!
Welcum, comfort of alkynd fruyt and grane!
Welcum, the byrdis beyld (shelter) apon the breyr!
Welcum, maister and rewlar of the yeȝr!
Welcum, weilfar of husbandis at the plewis!
Welcum, reparar of woddis, treis, and bewis (boughs)
Welcum, depayntar of the blomyt medis!
Welcum, the lyfe of euery thing that spredis!
Welcum, stourour (restorer) of alkynd bestiall!
Welcum be thi brycht bemys, glading all!
Welcum celestiall myrrour and aspy,
Attething (reproving) all that hantis (practise) sluggardy!'

These Scots poets kept the flame alive in the dark days between Chaucer and Spenser until the advent of 'the two chief lanterns of light to all others that have since employed their pennes upon English Poesie,' Wyatt and Surrey. For the best southern poet contemporary with Dunbar and Douglas, Stephen Hawes, groom of the chamber to Henry VII., is back in the Middle Ages with his 'Pastime of Pleasure; or, the History of Grand Amour and La Belle Pucel,' and back among the predecessors of Chaucer with his halting, hobbling rhythm. None too soon did Sir Thomas Wyatt the Elder (1503-42) and Henry Howard, son of the Duke of Norfolk, and (by courtesy) Earl of Surrey (d. 1547), come to the rescue.

Wyatt and Surrey.

It has been the singular fate of these two poets to be the object of the most persistent of all the persistent misunderstandings and misstatements in literary history, some of which must needs be nailed again. Surrey's rank,

through 'Tottel's Miscellany' (1557), is responsible for the unhistorical order 'Surrey and Wyatt,' but it was not *necessary for a university professor to make matters worse* by writing that Wyatt's 'songs are an inferior imitation of Surrey's.' How they can be an 'inferior imitation' of the songs of a man at least fourteen years his junior, who was not twenty-five years old when Wyatt died, is a riddle for the Sphinx. 'As early as 1526,' says Professor Hales, 'when Surrey was certainly not more than ten years old, Leland had honoured Wyatt, then twenty-three, as the most accomplished poet of his time. . . . Surely it is time Wyatt had a more general recognition as the first, in time at least, of those "courtly makers." . . . Surely it is time he should more generally have some credit for having introduced the sonnet into our literature.' Secondly, the statement is often made that 'to them we are indebted for the great reform which substituted a metrical for a rhythmical structure.' This is misleading, inasmuch as it leaves out of sight the fact that Wyatt and Surrey were only reintroducing a reform, this time with lasting success, which had once already been effected by Chaucer, every line of whose poetry is based on a 'metrical' and not a 'rhythmical structure.' Thirdly, these two poets are still very commonly said to have travelled in Italy. Wyatt, it is true, accompanied Sir John Russell when he went as ambassador to the papal court in 1527; but Surrey never got beyond France. Lastly, Puttenham's 'Henry, Earl of Surrey, and Sir Thomas Wyatt, *between whom I find very little difference*' ('Art of English Poesy,' 1589) has been repeated in effect over and over again, although any but a superficial examination reveals marked differences in spirit and in workmanship.

With a view to the final removal of these serious errors, the first thing to be done is to restore Wyatt to the position usually accorded to Surrey; to remember that he was a poet with an established reputation when Surrey was a boy; that Surrey had his friend and 'master's' models to improve upon, and it is impossible to say what he would have achieved without them; and that the sole credit of the *introduction* of the Italian influence belongs to Wyatt.

What Wyatt did.

The elder poet found English poetry in the deplorable plight in which we have seen it, and from which he endeavoured to rescue it by introducing the subjects and the measures of the Petrarchan love poetry. He succeeded in giving a good 'send-off' to modern lyric poetry; he is our first satirist on the classical model; he effected a partial reform of poetic diction, by means of a more careful selection of words, after Chaucer's example, and the avoidance of the 'aureate' terms of the fifteenth century; he introduced the sonnet, the heroic quatrain (as in Gray's 'Elegy'), the *ottava rima* (as in Byron's 'Don Juan'), the *terza rima*, and many lyric measures: but the restoration of English prosody to anything like the state of perfection in which Chaucer had left it proved a task beyond his powers. His most intolerable fault is the riming of unstressed ultimates, as in 'suffér, displeasúre'; 'harboúr, bannér.' On the other hand, what he can achieve at his best may be seen in the following extracts, each striking a new note in English verse; the latter, in *terza rima* (*aba*, *bcb*, *cdc*, and so on), is the opening of the first satire, in imitation of Horace's 'Town and Country Mouse':

'What should I say!
Since Faith is dead,
And Truth away
From you is fled?
Should I be led
With doubleness?
Nay! nay! mistress.

I promised you,
And you promised me,
To be as true
As I would be.
But since I see
Your double heart,
Farewell my part!

Thought for to take
'Tis not my mind;
But to forsake
One so unkind;
And as I find,
So will I trust;
Farewell, unjust!

Can ye say nay,
But that you said
That I alway
Should be obeyed?
And thus betrayed
Or that I wist'
Farewell, unkist!'

'My mother's maids, when they do sew and spin,
They sing a song made of the fieldish mouse;
That, for because her livelode was but thin,
Would needs go see her townish sister's house.
She thought herself endured to grievous pain,
The stormy blasts her cave so sore did souse,
That when the furrows swimmed with the rain
She must lie cold and wet, in sorry plight;
And worse than that, bare meat there did remain
To comfort her, when she her house had dight,
Sometime a barley corn, sometime a bean
For which she laboured hard both day and night,
In harvest time, while she might go and glean;
And when her store was stroyed with the flood,
Then wellaway! for she undone was clean.'

What Surrey did.

Surrey completed the work that Wyatt had begun. He was a far better metrist; he completed the reform in diction that Wyatt had initiated; generally, one may say that he was as much the more original of the two in the form of his poetry as his friend was the more original in his matter. But his greatest claim to our gratitude is his introduction of blank verse, the metre that was to be put to the mightiest uses of all in English poetry, in his translation of the Second and Fourth Books of the 'Aeneid.' Both Wyatt and Surrey avoid allegory; they are free from affectation and indelicacy; they were Reformers in religion; they were English gentlemen in the best sense; they 'struck a new poetical lode.' With such a record there is no place for exaggeration. The following stanzas are from Surrey's elegy on his friend—the first personal elegy in English literature:

'Wyatt resteth here, that quick could never rest:
Whose heavenly gifts encreased by disdain,
And virtue sank the deeper in his breast;
Such profit he by envy could obtain. . .

A visage stern, and mild, where both did grow,
Vice to contemn, in virtue to rejoice;
Amid great storms whom grace assured so,
To live upright and smile at fortune's choice.

A hand that taught what might be said in rhyme:
That reft Chaucer the glory of his wit:
A mark, the which (unperfected for time)
Some may approach, but never none may hit.

A tongue that served in foreign realms his king,
Whose courteous talk to virtue did inflame
Each noble heart: a worthy guide to bring
Our English youth by travail unto fame.

An eye whose judgment no effect could blind,
Friends to allure and foes to reconcile,
Whose piercing look did represent a mind
With virtue fraught, reposed, void of guile.

A heart where dread was never so imprest
To hide the thought that might the truth advance,
In neither fortune left nor yet represt,
To swell in wealth, or yield unto mischance.'

The thirty years after the death of Surrey were years of imitation, preparation, and experiment. Much poetry was written, and much of it was published in 'Miscellanies,' beginning with Tottel's in 1557, which opened with poems by Surrey and Wyatt. But only one name is of sufficient moment for special mention here, that of Thomas Sackville, afterwards Lord Buckhurst. Sackville is often said to be the greatest poet between Chaucer and Spenser; but in judging any such claim bulk as well as quality must be taken into the account, and Sackville's volume is exceedingly small. He contributed to the second edition of the 'Mirror for Magistrates' (1563) an 'Induction,' and the 'Tragedy' of Buckingham. Spenser himself says that Sackville's

Sackville.

'Learned muse hath writ her own record
In golden verse, worthy immortal fame';

and the student will have little difficulty in detecting in the

following stanzas from the 'Induction' an anticipatory echo of the music of the 'Faery Queen':

'Thence come we to the horrour and the hell,
The large great kingdoms, and the dreadful reign
Of Pluto in his throne where he did dwell,
The wide waste places, and the hugy plain,
The wailings, shrieks, and sundry sorts of pain,
The sighs, the sobs, the deep and deadly groan;
Earth, air, and all, resounding plaint and moan.

Here pul'd the babes, and here the maids unwed
With folded hands their sorry chance bewail'd;
Here wept the guiltless slain, and lovers dead,
That slew themselves when nothing else avail'd:
A thousand sorts of sorrows here, that wail'd
With sighs, and tears, sobs, shrieks, and all yfear,
That, oh, alas, it was a hell to hear.'

CHAPTER IV.

THE ENGLISH DRAMA.

WE have in this chapter to survey very briefly the whole course of English drama, sketching in most summary fashion its origins, its decline under Dryden, and its death and burial in the eighteenth century, but dwelling with such fulness as we may on the Elizabethan drama, especially under the three aspects of its rise in Marlowe, its consummation in Shakespeare, and its decadence in Jonson.

The Elizabethan drama is partly of native growth, but has also a large admixture of later foreign elements, coming in through the Renaissance. Roughly the native elements may be said to belong originally to religious drama, and the foreign elements to secular drama. As early as the tenth century, certainly, the Church had called in the aid of rudimentary dramatic performances in order to bring home to the understanding of the simple such events as the birth and resurrection of the Redeemer; these performances passed over to England with the Norman ecclesiastics. As was natural, further developments arose, and the so-called 'Miracles,' Miracle or Mystery plays, came into being. The Bible supplied the material of the Mysteries, which often expounded the mysteries connected with religion; Miracles consisted of the legends of saints, in whose honour they were acted. But the distinction of name is, in England, entirely modern; the name Miracle was used for both classes, as it will be here. The earliest Miracles probably date from the close of the eleventh century, but none have

Miracle Plays.

survived of earlier date than the twelfth, and none entirely in the vernacular earlier than the thirteenth. 'By degrees the vernacular encroached upon the Latin and displaced it; the scene passed from the Church to the public place or street; the action developed; and the actors were priests supported by lay-folk, or were lay-folk alone.' But 'no English play which has been preserved to us contains any marks of its representation by clerical actors.' The Church began to regard its quondam handmaid with suspicion; the Miracles fell into lay hands alone, but increased in popular favour; and the festival of Corpus Christi, which usually fell in June, from being a holy day, became a holiday devoted to the enactment of Miracles by the trade guilds. As the number of guilds desirous of taking part in these performances increased, the Christmas and Easter scenes, which had originally been the nucleus of the whole, were expanded in both directions until a complete cycle of plays was formed, starting from the Creation and Fall of Man, embracing certain Old Testament episodes with a special bearing on the gospel narrative, tracing in detail the principal events in the Redeemer's life, and rounding off the whole with the Judgment. Four such cycles have come down to us, called respectively the York, Wakefield, Chester, and Coventry plays.

The York Plays.

The York cycle, which numbers forty-eight plays, dates from the middle of the fourteenth century. It will be of interest to name some of the guilds, with the titles of the plays they had severally to enact:—

1. *Bakers*—'The Creation, Fall of Lucifer.' 2. *Plasterers*—'The Creation to the Fifth Day.' 3. *Cardmakers*—'God creates Adam and Eve.' 4. *Fullers*—'Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.' 5. *Coopers*—'Man's Disobedience and Fall.' 6. *Armourers*—'Adam and Eve driven from Eden.' 7. *Glovers*—'Sacrificium Cayme et Abell.' 8. *Shipwrights*—'Building of the Ark.' 9. *Fishers and Mariners*—'Noah and the Flood.' 10. '*Parchmyners' and Bookbinders*—'Abraham's Sacrifice.' 11. *Hosiers*—'The Israelites in Egypt, the Ten Plagues, and Passage of the Red Sea.' 12. *Spicers*—'Annunciation and visit of Elizabeth to Mary.' And so on.

As an illustration we select this characteristic passage from the play of the 'Fishers and Mariners':

'SCENE II.—*Noah's home, 1st son enters.*

1 fil. Where are ye, modir myne?
Come to my fadir sone.
Uxor. What says thou? sone?
1 fil. Moder, certeyne
My ffadir thynkis to flitte full ferre.
He biddis you haste with al youre mayne
Unto hym, that no thyng you marre.
Uxor. ȝa! good sone, hy the faste agayne,
And telle hym I wol come no narre (nearer).
1 filius. Dame, I wolde do youre biddyng fayne,
But yow bus (behoves) wende, els bese it warre (worse).
Uxor. Werre! that wolde I witte.
We bowrde (jest) al wrange, I wene.
1 filius. Modir, I saie you yitte,
My ffadir is bowne (ready) to flitte.
Uxor. Now, certis, I sall nouȝt sitte,
Or (ere) I se what he mene.

SCENE III.—*The Ark, as before.*

1 filius. Fadir, I have done nowe as ye comaunde,
My modir comes to you this daye.
Noe. Scho is welcome, I wele warrande,
This worlde sall sone be waste awaye. [*Wife comes in.*
Uxor. Wher arte thou Noye?
Noe. Loo! here at hande,
Come hedir faste, dame, I the praye.
Uxor. Trowes thou that I wol leve the harde lande,
And tourne up here on toure deraye (confusion)?
Nay, Noye, I am nouȝt bowne
to fonde (go) nowe over there ffellis (these hills);
Doo barnes, goo we and trusse (make ready) to towne.
Noe. Nay, certis, sothly than mon (must) ye drowne.
Uxor. In faythe thou were als goode come downe,
And go do som what ellis.
Noe. Dame, fowrty dayes are nerhand past
And gone sen it be-gan to rayne;
On lyffe salle noman lenger laste
Bot we allane, is nought to layne (conceal).
Uxor. Now Noye, in faythe the founes (growest silly) full faste,
This fare (proceeding) wille I no lenger frayne (inquire into),
Thou arte nere woode (mad), I am agaste,
Fare-wele, I wille go home agayne.

Noe. O! woman, arte thou woode?
Of my werkis thou not wotte,
All that has ban (bone) or bloode
Salle be overe flowed with the floode. [*Detains her.*
Uxor. In faithe, the were als goodo
to late me go my gatte (way).
We owte! herrowe!
Noe. What now! What cheere?
Uxor. I wille no narre for no kynnes (kind of) nede.
Noe. Helpe! my sonnes to holde her here,
For tille (to) her harmes she takes no heede.
2 filius. Beis mery, modir, and mende youre chere,
This worlde beis drowned with-outen drede.
Uxor. Allas! that I this lare shuld lere.
Noe Thou spilles us alle, ille myght thou speede!
3 filius. Dere modir, wonne (remain) with us,
ther shal no-thyng you greve.
Uxor. Nay, nedlyngis (needs) home me bus,
For I have tolis (tools) to trusse.
Noe. Woman, why dois thou thus,
To make us more myscheve?
Uxor. Noye, thou myght have leteyn (let) me wote (know),
Erly and late thou wente ther outte,
And ay at home thou lete me sytte,
To loke that nowhere were wele aboutte.
Noe. Dame, thou holde me excused of itt,
It was goddis wille with-owten doutte.
Uxor. What? wenys thou so for to go qwitte?
Nay, be my trouthe, thou getis a clowte. [*Strikes him.*
Noe. I pray the, dame, be stille.
Thus god wolde have it wrought.
Uxor Thow shulde have witte my wille,
Yf I wulde sente ther tille (assent thereto),
And Noye, for that same skylle (reason),
this bargan (strife) sall be brought.
Nowe at firste I fynde and feele
Wher thou hast to the forest soght,
Thou shuld have tolde me for oure seele (happiness)
Whan we were to slyke bargane broght.'

Miracles and the Later Drama.

It is a far cry from the Miracles to the Elizabethan drama, yet no one with the smallest critical faculty can fail to see the indebtedness of the latter to its crude forerunners. In the Wakefield cycle comic relief was given by a realistic farcical episode of sheep-stealing, which was pregnant of future developments. 'These early dramatists, too,

furnished the hints for all the nameless generic characters which figure so prominently in Shakespeare's plays. His First and Second Citizens, Carriers, Gentlemen, and Soldiers have all of them prototypes in the pageants of the craftsmen; and from the familiar talk by which the actors helped the townsfolk to realise the Scripture narrative was generalised the style made classical in the mouths of Bottom, Dogberry, and Falstaff.' Nor is this all. The pathetic situations in the scene between Abraham and Isaac and in the story of Christ; the grotesque character of Lucifer, the pantaloon of modern pantomime; the melodramatic character of the bombastic, ranting Herod (cp. Hamlet's 'out-Heroding Herod'); the pastoral element in the scene of the annunciation to the shepherds: none of these can have failed to influence the later history of the drama. The Miracle cycles continued to be played till the close of the sixteenth century.

Morality Plays

The Coventry cycle contains some allegorical personages, such as Contemplacio and Death, which are a mark of later date and represent a partial transition to the next stage in the development of the drama, the Morality play. The Morality, in which all the characters are allegorical abstractions intent upon the moral and religious edification of the audience, dates from the fifteenth century, the earliest examples being the 'Pride of Life' and the 'Castle of Perseverance,' the latter of which traces the history of Humanum Genus from birth to the Day of Judgment. In general interest and dramatic power they fall far below the Miracles. But whereas the latter were confined within a groove by the Scripture narrative and an unelastic body of dogma, the writers of Moralities were compelled to *invent a plot*, and to compensate for the uninteresting nature of their *dramatis personae* by ingenuity of construction. Their very weakness proved a source of dramatic strength. Every adventitious aid possible was called in to overcome the tedium inseparable from the antics of allegorical lay figures dramatised into some semblance of life. Scene-painting received some attention and dramatic 'properties' were freely introduced. Instead of the old rigid series of

somewhat disconnected pageants, the incidents of the play told into the career of a central allegorical personage or hero, and thus a distinct advance was made towards unity of construction. Moreover, in the attempt strongly to individualise the allegorical characters, with a view to arousing greater interest in them, the playwrights were led to depict real characters with moral nicknames. Finally, by the gradual substitution for virtues and vices of actual historical or contemporaneous people, who were good illustrations of particular virtues and vices, there came to be produced some old plays, tragedies, histories, and comedies, as yet unaffected by imitation of classical models, from which the allegorical personages had been nearly excluded. Thus we see that the Morality proved a way of escape for the infant drama from the necessary limitations of the Miracle.

Interludes.

A word or two about one other species of drama will bring us to the beginning of Elizabeth's reign. Comic relief was often provided in the Moralities by means of an Interlude, in which the devil, borrowed from the Miracles, had an attendant, Vice or Iniquity (see Shakespeare's 'Richard III.,' iii. 1.82), who delighted the audience by the tricks he played on the fiend. In the course of time the Interlude detached itself from the Morality, and in the hands of John Heywood took literary form. Heywood's Interludes are as simple as possible in construction, being little more than the dramatisation of an anecdote; the best known is the 'Four P.'s,' in which a 'Poticary, a Pardoner, and a Palmer see which can tell the biggest lie, while the Pedlar is appointed judge. The Palmer wins easily with

> 'I never saw nor knew in all my conscience
> Any one woman out of patience.'

These Interludes were often acted by household servants or retainers, and are important as developing the custom of a nobleman of wealth having a band of more or less well-trained actors dependent on him. In the latter part of Elizabeth's reign, when the drama proper was full-grown, we find theatrical companies calling themselves

'the Earl of Leicester's servants,' 'the Queen's players,' and so on.

The importance of the Morality in the development of the regular or legitimate drama will now be manifest. In the first place, the Morality proper led to the creation of, and very largely gave way before, plays which mark a distinct advance in the direction of true drama, and which may be divided into Morality-comedies, Morality-tragedies, and Morality-histories (*e.g.* Bale's 'King Johan,' 1548). Secondly, the Interlude developed from the Morality, and in Heywood's hands may be regarded as a dramatic germ, needing only extension and complexity to become rudimentary drama. With these added, as in 'Gammer Gurton's Needle,' acted at Cambridge in 1566, we have a farcical five-act comedy.

In the division into five acts we see the influence of the Renaissance. But that influence is much more marked in the first regular English comedy and the first regular English tragedy, both earlier than 'Gammer Gurton's Needle.' The latter was ousted from the position of 'first regular English comedy' by the discovery in 1818 of the unique copy of 'Ralph Roister Doister,' by Nicholas Udall, headmaster of Eton and then of Westminster. Its date is before rather than after 1550. Its plot, in briefest summary, is this: Roister Doister, a feather-brained, chicken-hearted coxcomb, is mischievously led on by Matthew Merygreke to make love to the widow Christian Custance in the absence of her betrothed, Gawin Goodluck. Complications ensue; but finally, Roister Doister, having been literally beaten off in his love-siege by the widow and her maids, is good-humouredly allowed to be reconciled to the betrothed pair. Here, it is to be particularly noted, we have an amalgamation of the 'Miles Gloriosus' of Plautus and the Morality-Interlude, just as we have in the character of Merygreke a compound of the 'parasite' of Plautus with the 'vice' of the Morality. The regular construction of the plot and the division into five acts are classical; but thoroughly English are the story, the characters, the diction and the verse

'Ralph Roister Doister'

If, as is undoubtedly the case, our first regular comedy is preponderatingly of native origin, our first regular tragedy, 'Gorboduc' or 'Ferrex and Porrex' (acted 1562), is at least equally of classical origin; indeed, it is modelled on the 'Thebais' of Seneca, though the subject is taken from legendary British history. The argument is thus summarised: 'Gorboduc, king of Britain, divided his realms in his lifetime to his sons, Ferrex and Porrex. The sons fell to dissension. The younger killed the elder. The mother, that more dearly loved the elder, for revenge killed the younger. The people, moved with the cruelty of the fact, rose in rebellion, and slew both father and mother. The nobility assembled, and most terribly destroyed the rebels; and afterwards, for want of issue of the prince, whereby the succession of the crown became uncertain, they fell to civil war, etc.' 'Gorboduc' is an academic Senecan play, played before Elizabeth by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple. Its subject is British, it is true; it does not observe the 'unities' of time and place, and there is a dumb show before each act. But in all else it is ultra-classical. The action is narrated by messengers, none is seen on the stage; in place of dialogue there is endless declamation; and each act but the last terminates with a chorus. The piece is attributed to Thomas Sackville (see p. 36) and Thomas Norton, and the stateliness and restraint of the first three acts confirm their attribution to Sackville, who is not unworthy of the honour of being *the first to use blank verse in drama.* The following speech—one of the best in the play—describing the death of Porrex, will show how far removed is this early verse, excellent as it is for its time, from the blank verse of 'Henry V.' or 'Lear':

'Gorboduc.'

'The noble prince, pierced with the sudden wound,
Out of his wretched slumber hastily start,
Whose strength now failing straight he overthrew,
When in the full his eyes, e'en now unclosed,
Beheld the queen, and cried to her for help.
We then, alas! the ladies which that time
Did there attend, seeing that heinous deed,
And hearing him oft call the wretched name

Of mother, and to cry to her for aid
Whose direful hand gave him the mortal wound,
Pitying, alas! (for naught else could we do),
His ruthful end, ran to the woeful bed,
Despoilèd straight his breast and, all we might,
Wipèd in vain, with napkins next at hand,
The sudden streams of blood that flushèd fast
Out of the gaping wound. O, what a look!
O what a rueful steadfast eye, methought,
He fixed upon my face! which to my death
Will never part from me, when with a braid
A deep-fetched sigh he gave, and therewithal
Clasping his hands, to heaven he cast his sight;
And straight, pale death pressing within his face,
The flying ghost his mortal corpse forsook.'

From 'Gorboduc' to 'Tamburlaine.'

The plays that were produced in the twenty-five years between 'Gorboduc' and Marlowe's 'Tamburlaine' may be divided into two main classes: scholarly 'academic' plays resembling 'Gorboduc,' written for the wealthy, and popular plays written for the masses. Before 1587 very few plays were printed, and it is questionable whether any of the popular plays have survived. We know, however, from contemporary criticism that they must have borrowed their form from earlier native dramas and their matter largely from Italian sources. But 'Tamburlaine' cannot have risen sheer from the level plain; the romantic drama must have been led up to more gradually; there must have been playwrights whose purpose it was to bridge the gap which divided the crude popular drama from the scholarly academic drama, drawing elements from both sources. And in fact two plays of this character have survived, Richard Edwards's 'Damon and Pythias,' 1571, and Whetstone's 'Promos and Cassandra,' 1578. The latter is the source of Shakespeare's 'Measure for Measure.' The dramatic quality of its verse may not unfairly be gauged from the following brief extract, in which, like Claudio and Isabella, her brother is urging Cassandra to save his life by submitting to dishonour:

'Nay, sweet sister, more slander would inflame
Your spotless life, to reave your brother's breath,
When you have power for to enlarge the same,
Once in your hand doth lie my life and death.

Weigh that I am the self-same flesh you are,
  Think I once gone the house will go to wrack;
Know forcèd faults for slander need not care;
  Look you for blame if I fail through your lack.
Consider well my great extremity.
  If otherwise this doom I could revoke,
I would not spare for any jeopardy
  To free thee, wench, from this same heavy yoke.'

Elizabethan Drama.

It has been remarked that the development of English poetry in the fourteenth century was too sudden to be lasting; Chaucer's successors are a feeble folk. The Golden Age of our literature, so tardy in its coming, so impatiently expected, was the more lasting for having been so long a-preparing. But for the long and gradual development in drama, leading up to the great Elizabethan outburst, it is more than possible that the age would have been poetic rather than dramatic. But for Sackville's 'unrimed riming couplets' it is more than possible that Marlowe would not have created his 'mighty line.' But for Marlowe, Shakespeare's work would have been so much harder that he would certainly have achieved much less. This may be the place to consider for a moment why Elizabethan literature is predominantly dramatic; the reasons are not far to seek. In the first place, the drama alone was remunerative. Then, it appealed to a larger public than any other branch of literature possibly could; in fact, it was the only literary means of reaching a great mass of people. Books were still comparatively rare and dear; the proportion of people who could read was small; there was no class of studious readers. Lastly, the times themselves were dramatic; life abounded in dramatic elements and situations; and a great literature always stands in close, intimate, direct relation to the life amid which it is created.

Shakespeare's predecessors.

The way was made plain for Shakespeare and the 'actor-playwrights' by the group of dramatists known as the 'university wits,' who may be dated, as a group, 1580-1590. Of them, John Lyly led the way in writing prose dialogue full of smart repartee; George Peele, in writing sweet verse, rather

poetical than dramatic, flowing evenly in smooth diction; Thomas Kyd, in his 'Spanish Tragedy,' led the way in creating the bloody style of tragedy (he was probably also the author of the old play of 'Hamlet'), of which we have an example in 'Titus Andronicus,' and a refined intellectualised example in the Shakespearean 'Hamlet'; Robert Greene, in introducing into the drama English country life and fresh young womanhood, in a word, in doing for comedy something of what Marlowe did for tragedy. But all these achievements pale, just as what Marlowe did for tragedy pales, before what he did for drama in general. He is the only predecessor of Shakespeare with whom we *must* linger.

Says Swinburne: 'Of English blank verse, one of the few highest forms of verbal harmony or poetic expression, the genius of Marlowe was the absolute and divine creator. By mere dint of original and godlike instinct he discovered and called into life the hardest and highest form of English verse, the only instrument since found possible for our tragic or epic poetry. He created the modern tragic drama.' And again: 'Before him there was neither genuine blank verse nor a genuine tragedy in our language. After his arrival the way was prepared—the paths were made straight for Shakespeare.' These are great claims, and the reader whose dramatic studies have begun and ended with Shakespeare will incline to suspect their truth; but on the whole they are justified. Once for all, let the student remember that the same literature may and must be judged in two quite different ways, according to its intrinsic excellence and according to its place in historical development; in other words, there is the intrinsic estimate, and there is the historic estimate. Shakespeare may, of course, be compared in intrinsic merit with Marlowe and with Jonson; but in the historic estimate, which it is one of the purposes of this book to furnish, it must be obvious that it would make an immense difference if Jonson had preceded Shakespeare and Marlowe followed him, if Marlowe had had Shakespeare's work to improve upon and Jonson had not.

The historic estimate.

Christopher Marlowe, the son of a Canterbury shoemaker, was born in the same year as Shakespeare. He took his Master of Arts degree at Cambridge in 1587, the year of 'Tamburlaine.' In 1593 he was killed in a tavern brawl. If Shakespeare had died in the same year, what he had written might have shown greater promise, but Marlowe would rightly have won the greater renown. For in less than six years he had created the English romantic drama. His principal plays were the two parts of 'Tamburlaine the Great,' 'The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus,' 'The Jew of Malta,' and 'Edward II.' On this last play Lamb passed the famous criticism: 'This tragedy is in a very different style from "mighty Tamburlaine." The reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty in Edward furnished hints which Shakespeare scarce improved in his Richard the Second; and the death-scene of Marlowe's king moves pity and terror beyond any scene, ancient or modern, with which I am acquainted.' In 'history' then also, Marlowe prepared the way for Shakespeare. But, in order to examine and establish the claims that have been made on his behalf, it will be best to confine our attention to 'Tamburlaine' and 'Faustus,' especially the latter.

Kit Marlowe.

'Tamburlaine'—the two parts may be regarded as one long play—is merely a succession of scenes in the life of the Scythian shepherd who imagines himself the instrument of Heaven's vengeance upon men. The 'stormy monotony of Titanic truculence which blusters like a simoom through the noisy course of its ten fierce acts' may be illustrated by the opening of Act iv. scene 4, in the Second Part.

'Tamburlaine'

'*Enter* Tamburlaine *drawn in his Chariot by the Kings of* Trebizond *and* Syria, *with bits in their mouths, reins in his left hand, and in his right hand a whip with which he scourgeth them.*

Tamb. Hollo, ye pampered jades of Asia![1]
What! can ye draw but twenty miles a day,
And have so proud a chariot at your heels,
And such a coachman as great Tamburlaine?'

[1] Cp. '2 Henry IV' ii 4, 177-180.

Possibly the student is not yet prepared to admit the claims made on behalf of Marlowe. And we may add that the play is dramatically very defective. It contains about twenty murders and many battle-scenes, but there is nothing that can be called a plot, no complexity, no balance of parts, no intrigue, no characterisation worthy of the name, no love as a motive. On the other hand, the fact that it is *the first play written for the public at large in blank verse* entitles its author to infinite credit. Moreover, it was the first play put on the English stage without the aid of either academic chorus or popular dumb-show. The dramatist's intentions are expressed in the Prologue:

> 'From jigging veins of riming mother wits,
> And such conceit as clownage keeps in pay,
> We'll lead you to the stately tent of war,
> Where you shall hear the Scythian Tamburlaine
> Threatening the world with high astounding terms
> And scourging kingdoms with his conquering sword.
> View but his picture in this tragic glass,
> And then applaud his fortune as you please.'

These intentions may perhaps be thus enumerated in plain prose: to divorce English plays from riming doggerel and vulgar clownage; to handle new themes of war and history, and in a rhetorical manner; to please the people and live by their patronage. 'Tamburlaine' is a good example of the Marlowan type of tragedy—'idealisation of gigantic passion on a gigantic scale.' Here it is the passion for dominion, in 'Faustus' it is the passion for the power that comes with knowledge, in the 'Jew of Malta' it is the passion for wealth.

'Doctor Faustus'

The special importance of 'Tamburlaine' lies in the fact that it was Marlowe's first play; he appeals much more strongly to modern readers in 'Doctor Faustus.' This play is divided into fourteen scenes without acts; the plot is simple and familiar. In the own words of the hero, 'For vain pleasure of twenty-four years hath Faustus lost eternal joy and felicity. I writ Lucifer and Mephistophilis a bill with mine own blood: the date is expired; the time will come and he will fetch me.' Under this compact Faustus

had all knowledge and power, everything that his mind or heart could desire, during the twenty-four years. He had asked for Helen, and greeted her appearance in these matchless lines:

'Was this the face that launched a thousand ships,
And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.—
Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies!
Come, Helen, come, give me my soul again.
Here will I dwell, for heaven is in those lips,
And all is dross that is not Helena.
I will be Paris, and for love of thee,
Instead of Troy, shall Wittenberg be sacked;
And I will combat with weak Menelaus,
And wear thy colours on my plumed crest;
Yea, I will wound Achilles in the heel,
And then return to Helen for a kiss.
Oh, thou art fairer than the evening air
Clad in the beauty of a thousand stars.'

This is in the last scene but one; the last scene is one of the finest things even in Elizabethan drama. Goethe's admiration for the whole piece was unbounded. We quote the close of the play, Faustus's last hour:

'*All.* Faustus, farewell.
[*Exeunt* SCHOLARS. *The clock strikes eleven*
Faustus. Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live
And then thou must be damned perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come;
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a month, a week, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come, and Faustus must be damned.
O, I'll leap up to my God! Who pulls me down?—
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop · ah, my Christ!—
Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
Yet will I call on him · O, spare me, Lucifer!—
Where is it now? 'tis gone: and see, where God
Stretched out his arm, and bends his ireful brows!
Mountains and hills, come, come, and fall on me,

And hide me from the heavy wrath of God!
No, no!
Then will I headlong run into the earth·
Earth, gape! O no, it will not harbor me!
You stars that reigned at my nativity,
Whose influence hath allotted death and hell,
Now draw up Faustus, like a foggy mist,
Into the entrails of yon lab'ring clouds,
That, when you vomit forth into the air,
My limbs may issue from your smoky mouths,
So that my soul may but ascend to heaven!
[*The clock strikes the half-hour.*
Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill all be past anon.
O God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransomed me,
Impose some end to my incessant pain;
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be saved!
O, no end is limited to damnéd souls!
Why wert thou not a creature wanting soul?
Or why is this immortal that thou hast?
Ah, Pythagoras' metempsychosis, were that true,
This soul should fly from me, and I be changed
Unto some brutish beast! all beasts are happy,
For, when they die,
Their souls are soon dissolved in elements;
But mine must live still to be plagued in hell.
Cursed be the parents that engendered me!
No, Faustus, curse thyself, curse Lucifer
That hath deprived thee of the joys of heaven.
[*The clock strikes twelve.*
O, it strikes, it strikes! Now, body, turn to air,
Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell!
[*Thunder and lightning.*
O soul, be changed into little water drops,
And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!

Enter DEVILS.

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!
Ugly hell, gape not; come not Lucifer!
I'll burn my books! Ah, Mephistophilis!
[*Exeunt* DEVILS *with* FAUSTUS.

Enter CHORUS.

Chorus. Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight,
And burnéd is Apollo's laurel bough,
That sometime grew within this learnéd man.

Faustus is gone: regard his hellish fall,
Whose fiendful fortune may exhort the wise
Only to wonder at unlawful things,
Whose deepness doth entice such forward wits
To practise more than heavenly power permits. [*Exit.*
Terminat hora diem, terminat auctor opus.'

Perhaps by this time the reader's opinion may have changed. If the blank verse of this scene be compared with that of 'Gorboduc' (see p. 45), it will be seen that Marlowe has discovered the secret of *making it dramatic.* If blank verse has to be the medium of expressing human passion it must have liberty from the restraints of hard and fast rule, and the measure of that liberty Marlowe hits admirably in the lines just quoted. It cannot be too well understood that this was a stupendous achievement. There are things in Marlowe we find it hard to forgive: his lack of humour, his apparent conception of life as being made up of Titanic characters like himself; his inability to subordinate his poetic powers to the requirements of dramatic art,—'Faustus' itself is a psychological poem in dramatic form rather than a drama. But when we compare the state in which he found English popular drama with the state in which he left it at his death, and still more when we think of his creation of the 'mighty line,' censure is overwhelmed in praise.

What Marlowe achieved

The almost universal recognition at the present day of Shakespeare's supreme position, if not in all literature, at least in all drama, is sufficient proof of the impossibility of doing justice to such a subject within our narrow limits. In selecting one or more topics to treat with some approach to thoroughness, it seems best to run rapidly over his dramatic career, noting the approximate order in which he wrote certain plays and groups of plays; then to deal more fully with one typical play; and lastly to seek the elements of his greatness, the grounds of his supremacy.

Shakespeare

William Shakespeare was born at Stratford-on-Avon in 1564, his father being a glover and farmer, and his mother belonging to a gentle family, the Ardens of Warwickshire. The boy doubtless learnt his 'small Latin and less Greek'

(perhaps not so small after all) at the Free Grammar School; he married, in 1582, Anne Hathaway, who was eight years his senior, and had by her three children; in or about 1587 he went to London, and threw in his lot with the play-actors and playwrights, being no doubt employed at first to touch up and rewrite old plays. In the course of a few years he prospered, obtained noble patronage, became famous, was in favour at Court, became a shareholder in the Globe Theatre—thenceforward his principal source of income—bought property at Stratford, and finally returned thither about 1611 with a comfortable fortune, there to die only five years later, it is said on his birthday.

Where Shakespeare began in drama.

Leaving out of account early plays, such as 'Titus Andronicus,' in which Shakespeare in all probability only collaborated, or which he may have found in the *répertoire* of his company and partly rewritten, the first play we come to entirely from his own pen is 'Love's Labour's Lost,' just such a play as we might expect from a 'young man from the country,' half impressed by, and more than half inclined to ridicule, the ways of town society. It is at once a 'topical play' and a 'comedy of affectations.' It is remarkable that the earliest and latest plays, this and the 'Tempest,' are apparently the most original in plot. Shakespeare must have recognised that his genius did not lie in the fabrication of plots, and that by borrowing them, often from sources familiar to his public, and transmuting them to his purposes, he conserved his creative energies for work at once of a higher character and more suited to his powers. 'Love's Labour's Lost' has been called 'topical' because it introduces a number of topics of the day, such as academies for young men, current fashions, and affectations in speech and dress, while the very names of the chief characters are those of leaders in the civil war in France in which Englishmen were then assisting Henry of Navarre. But we must not linger over this play, though it is well to see where Shakespeare began in drama. The 'Two Gentlemen of Verona' and the 'Comedy of Errors' represent no noteworthy advance in dramatic power. A favourable example of Shakespeare's style in these earliest plays is seen

in 'Love's Labour's Lost,' iv. 3, 350-62. It will be noticed that one thought is expressed in various ways, that the thought is too thin for the language, that there is a straining after effect, and plays on words are frequent:

'From women's eyes this doctrine I derive:
They sparkle still the right Promethean fire;
They are the books, the arts, the academes,
That show, contain and nourish all the world:
Else none at all in aught proves excellent.
Then fools you were these women to forswear,
Or keeping what is sworn you will prove fools.
For wisdom's sake, a word that all men love,
Or for love's sake, a word that loves all men,
Or for men's sake, the authors of these women,
Or women's sake, by whom we men are men,
Let us once lose our oaths to find ourselves,
Or else we lose ourselves to keep our oaths.'

But when this period of apprenticeship is past we begin to leave its crudities behind: doggrel disappears, 'conceits' become less frequent, rime is replaced by blank verse, the verse begins to move with the feeling it expresses, the symmetrical grouping of characters is less marked, and the characters themselves not only live and move but *develop*, incident and character influencing character, before our very eyes. Upon this advance in *characterisation* the student should keep his attention fixed: it is the gauge of the dramatist's growth in the mastery of his art; in its perfection it is his supreme dramatic quality. In the plays in which this advance first becomes marked, 'Romeo and Juliet,' the one early tragedy, 'Midsummer Night's Dream' and the 'Merchant of Venice,' we see the dramatist mastered by, and then mastering, the great temptation of his early time, the same that had beset Marlowe in another shape, that of permitting his poetic and lyric faculty to dominate his dramas. In Shakespeare the danger is seen especially in the prevalence of verse forms other than those of blank verse pure and simple. This tendency consummated in 'Romeo and Juliet;' it is well illustrated in the 'dawn-song' with which Act iii. scene 5 opens:

Signs of growth

'*Jul.* Wilt thou be gone? it is not yet near day:
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,

That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear;
Nightly she sings on yon pomegranate-tree:
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.
Rom. It was the lark, the herald of the morn,
No nightingale: look, love, what envious streaks
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east:
Night's candles are burnt out, and jocund day
Stands tip-toe on the misty mountain tops.
I must begone and live, or stay and die.
Jul. Yon light is not day-light, I know it, I:
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,
To be to thee this night a torch-bearer,
And light thee on thy way to Mantua:
Therefore stay yet; thou need'st not to be gone.
Rom. Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death;
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.
I'll say yon grey is not the morning's eye,
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cynthia's brow;
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat
The vaulty heaven so high above our heads:
I have more care to stay than will to go;
Come, death, and welcome! Juliet wills it so'

History.

Then the dramatist turns to English history, deriving his material mainly from Holinshed's 'Chronicles,' and works out its problems in his own way, taking his subjects in a moral order, beginning with the weakest and worst kings, and ending with his ideal of kingship in Henry the Fifth. The historical plays—'Henry VI.,' 'Richard III.,' 'Richard II.,' 'John,' 'Henry IV.' and 'Henry V.'—are studies of practical success and failure, the mild comedy of good government, and more often the tragedy of misgovernment—the revenges of time in history. On the other hand, the tragedies are studies of the life of a soul, and its ruin through passion, weakness, crime, or calamity. The predominant note of the 'histories' is heard in the closing lines of 'King John':

'This England never did, nor never shall
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Naught shall make us rue.
If England to itself do rest but true.'

With 'Henry V.' we reach 1599; the perfect marriage of thought and noble word-music to which the dramatist has now attained may be seen in Henry's famous 'Crispin Crispian' speech before the battle of Agincourt:

> '*West.* O that we now had here
> But one ten thousand of those men in England
> That do no work to-day!
> *K. Hen.* What's he that wishes so?
> My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:
> If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
> To do our country loss; and if to live,
> The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
> God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
> By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
> Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
> It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
> Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
> But if it be a sin to covet honour,
> I am the most offending soul alive.
> No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England;
> God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour
> As one man more, methinks, would share from me
> For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!
> Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
> That he which hath no stomach to his fight,
> Let him depart; his passport shall be made
> And crowns for convoy put into his purse:
> We would not die in that man's company
> That fears his fellowship to die with us.
> This day is called the feast of Crispian:
> He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
> Will stand a tip-toe when this day is named,
> And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
> He that shall live this day, and see old age,
> Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
> And say "To-morrow is Saint Crispian":
> Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars,
> And say "These wounds I had on Crispin's day."
> Old men forget; yet all shall be forgot,
> But he'll remember with advantages
> What feats he did that day: then shall our names,
> Familiar in his mouth as household words,
> Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
> Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
> Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
> This story shall the good man teach his son;
> And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,

From this day to the ending of the world,
But we in it shall be remembered;
We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.'

Comedy and Roman history

Then, leaving English history, and before turning to Roman, Shakespeare took a holiday in the forest of Arden and elsewhere, and enriched the world with three masterpieces in comedy, 'Much Ado about Nothing,' 'As You Like It,' and 'Twelfth Night.' His fecundity in original character-creation at this time may be judged by the fact that, in these three comedies alone, not a suggestion is to be found in his sources for Benedick and Beatrice, Dogberry and Verges; Jaques, Touchstone and Audrey; Malvolio, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Fabian, the jester Feste, and Maria. With 'Julius Caesar' (1601), to be followed later by 'Antony and Cleopatra' and 'Coriolanus,' Shakespeare turned to Roman history and gave us his 'godlike Romans.' His authority here was Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch; and he paid the old Greek biographer, who has been called 'the universal Shakespeare of biography,' the highest possible compliment by taking from him very much more material than he took from any other source, lifting as it were whole pages at once and vitalising them into dramatic poetry.

The great tragedies.

From about 1602 to 1608 is the period of the great tragedies, 'Hamlet,' 'Othello,' 'Lear,' 'Macbeth,' and the dark comedies, 'Measure for Measure' and 'Troilus and Cressida.' Among the four great tragedies the dramatist's greatest plays are to be found. 'Hamlet' holds us by the intellectual character of the hero and the modern nature of the problems which make the tragedy of the play; 'Macbeth' is in every respect a complete contrast to 'Hamlet,' and sweeps us along with the irresistible force of the hero's tumultuous

ambition; 'Othello' grips the heart from the first scene, maintains its hold mercilessly by the marvellous weaving of the plot-web, and leaves the reader at the last limp and exhausted. 'Lear' is a play of the early semi-barbarous ages, and may be regarded as the *ne plus ultra* in drama of chaotic force and stormy passion. But it is a great play, and perhaps shows better than any other how completely Shakespeare had learnt to bend language and metre to his dramatic purposes—of which the meeting of Lear and Cordelia may serve as an illustration (IV. vii. 42-84):

'*Cor.* He wakes; speak to him.
Doc. Madam, do you: 'tis fittest.
Cor. How does my royal lord? How fares your majesty?
Lear You do me wrong to take me out o' the grave:
Thou art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
Upon a wheel of fire, that mine own tears
Do scald like molten lead.
Cor. Sir, do you know me?
Lear. You are a spirit, I know: when did you die?
Cor Still, still, far wide!
Doct. He's scarce awake · let him alone awhile.
Lear. Where have I been? Where am I? Fair daylight?
I am mightily abused. I should e'en die with pity,
To see another thus. I know not what to say.
I will not swear these are my hands: let's see;
I feel this pin prick. Would I were assured
Of my condition!
Cor. O, look upon me, sir,
And hold your hands in benediction o'er me:
No, sir, you must not kneel.
Lear. Pray, do not mock me:
I am a very foolish fond old man,
Fourscore and upward, not an hour more or less;
And, to deal plainly,
I fear I am not in my perfect mind.
Methinks I should know you, and know this man;
Yet I am doubtful: for I am mainly ignorant
What place this is; and all the skill I have
Remembers not these garments; nor I know not
Where I did lodge last night. Do not laugh at me;
For, as I am a man, I think this lady
To be my child Cordelia.
Cor. And so I am, I am.
Lear. Be your tears wet? yes, 'faith: I pray weep not:
If you have poison for me, I will drink it.

I know you do not love me; for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.
Cor. No cause, no cause.
Lear. Am I in France?
Kent. In your own kingdom, sir.
Lear. Do not abuse me.
Doct. Be comforted, good madam: the great rage,
You see, is kill'd in him: and yet it is danger
To make him even o'er the time he has lost.
Desire him to go in; trouble him no more
Till further settling.
Cor. Will't please your highness walk?
Lear. You must bear with me:
Pray you now, forget and forgive: I am old and foolish.'

The last plays

For the small group of last plays, 'Pericles,' 'Cymbeline,' 'Winter's Tale,' 'The Tempest,' the name 'romances' has been suggested. 'In all there is the same romantic incident of lost children recovered by those to whom they are dear. . . . In all there is a beautiful romantic background of sea or mountain.' 'All these plays turn on broken family ties united, or their breach forgiven.' No attempt has been made in this chapter to connect Shakespeare's life in any way with the sequence of his plays; it is a moot point among critics how far any such connection can be made good. But, whether the scenes of pardon and reconciliation in these last plays are in part explained by the poet's approaching retirement to Stratford or not, we may surely infer that their calmer tone and serener outlook are those of the great magician himself, as he lays aside his magic wand, like Prospero in the passage we have selected as our final illustration:

'*Pros.* Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes and groves,
And ye that on the sands with printless foot
Do chase the ebbing Neptune and do fly him
When he comes back: you demi-puppets that
By moonshine do the green sour ringlets make,
Whereof the ewe not bites, and you whose pastime
Is to make midnight mushrooms, that rejoice
To hear the solemn curfew; by whose aid,
Weak masters though ye be, I have bedimmed
The noontide sun, called forth the mutinous winds,

And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war: to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt: the strong-based promontory
Have I made shake and by the spurs plucked up
The pine and cedar: graves at my command
Have waked their sleepers, oped, and let 'em forth
By my so potent art. But this rough magic
I here abjure, and, when I have required
Some heavenly music, which even now I do,
To work mine end upon their senses that
This airy charm is for, I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And, deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book.'

'The Tempest,' c 1611.

There can probably be no better play than this to treat of more fully. The first scene is a shipwreck on a desert island, inhabited only by Prospero, the banished Duke of Milan, his daughter Miranda, a monster named Caliban (from 'cannibal'), who acts as their servant, and some spirits, of whom Ariel is the chief. Prospero is a magician, and by his art, with the aid of Ariel, he is causing the shipwreck of his brother Antonio, the usurper of the dukedom of Milan, Alonso, king of Naples, who had aided Antonio in his usurpation, Ferdinand the son of Alonso, Sebastian, Alonso's brother, Gonzalo an old councillor, and others. In the second scene Miranda, who is distressed by the wreck, prays

'If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.'

Prospero's hope is that Ferdinand and Miranda may fall in love. It is necessary, therefore, that the latter should know something of their history, and her father tells her the chief incidents:[1] that Antonio and Alonso had had them cast adrift in an open boat twelve years ago, when Miranda was only three years old, but that

'A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo, out of his charity'

[1] This avoidance of a prologue by creating a dramatic necessity for the narration of the previous history of the characters is a stroke of high art.

had furnished them with food, clothes and books, and they had arrived safely on this island. Here Ariel enters to report the success of the shipwreck, and is sent off 'like a water-nymph' to lure Ferdinand to Prospero's cave. While this is being done we are introduced to the 'servant-monster' Caliban. Ariel returns drawing Ferdinand on with songs, which had the sound of the sea-swell in them; 'by some strange touch upon the imagination we see and feel a fairy-haunted bottom of the ocean, swaying with the metre to the wash of waves, full of dim, rich and fantastical shapes':

> 'Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.
> Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
> *But then.* Ding-dong.
> *Ari.* Hark! now I hear them,—Ding-dong, bell.'

Miranda, who remembers no man but her father and Caliban, at once falls in love with Ferdinand, as he does with her.

In the second act Gonzalo gives a description of an ideal commonwealth taken from Montaigne's 'Essays,' Florio's translation of which is the only book we now possess containing Shakespeare's autograph. This aided by Ariel's music puts the whole party to sleep, except Antonio and Sebastian. Antonio suggests to Sebastian to imitate his example, and they are on the point of slaying Alonso and Gonzalo when Ariel awakes the latter. In the third act Ferdinand is discovered by Miranda at work bearing logs, a task which Prospero has imposed to test him. She pities, and in her innocent love half woos him:

> 'Prompt me, plain and holy innocence!
> I am your wife, if you will marry me.'

Prospero is by, unseen.

> 'So glad of this as they I cannot be,
> Who are surprised withal; but my rejoicing
> At nothing can be more.'

In another scene, when Antonio and Sebastian are plotting to renew their villainy, Ariel and Prospero's 'meaner ministers,' 'with good life and observation strange,' bring in a banquet; when, in the desperation of hunger, they are about to partake, 'Ariel, like a harpy, claps his wings upon the table, and, with a quaint device, the banquet vanishes.' Then Ariel upbraids all the 'three men of sin,' and warns them that 'nothing but heart-sorrow and a clear life ensuing can' guard them from the 'wraths' of the 'powers.'

The fourth act is mainly given over to a masque in honour of the lovers, at the conclusion of which Prospero assures Ferdinand that

> 'Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
> As I foretold you, were all spirits and
> Are melted into air, into thin air:
> And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
> The cloud-capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces,
> The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
> Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve,
> And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
> Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.'

The fifth act gives us an excellent *dénouement*. Prospero, being assured by Ariel that

> 'the king,
> His brother and yours, abide all three distracted
> And the remainder mourning over them,'

decides that

> 'the rarer action is
> In virtue than in vengeance: they being penitent,
> The sole drift of my purpose doth extend
> Not a frown further.'

Ariel leads them all to Prospero's cell, and slowly 'their rising senses begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle their clearer reason.' Prospero in hat and rapier proclaims himself 'sometime Milan'; and, though at first incredulous, Alonso is convinced by the discovery of

Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess. Ariel's last charge is to provide 'calm seas, auspicious gales' for the return to Naples 'to see the nuptial of these our dear-beloved solemnised.'

> 'My Ariel, chick,
> That is thy charge: then to the elements
> Be free, and fare thou well!'

It is remarkable that, though for the most part Shakespeare threw the restrictions of the 'unities' of time and place to the winds, as incompatible with his conception of drama, in this play he has elected to observe them, as if to show us what he could do in that kind; the action takes place in one day, and all but the first scene within the narrow limits of an island.

Appreciation.

It by no means diminishes the difficulty of assigning some of the elements of Shakespeare's greatness that that greatness is now universally recognised. The matter may be put in this way: in every other writer's best qualities he is an equal shareholder, in some of his own he is unapproached and unapproachable. One author may sometimes exhibit a power of creating a character comparable to his, another may sometimes equal him in imagination, a third in humour, and so forth; but such a multiplicity of gifts, which, combined, make the greatest literature, seems never to have been bestowed on any other than he. No one else, not even Homer or Dante, has won homage so unanimous and uncontested. 'The first page of Shakespeare that I read,' says Goethe, 'made me his for life; and when I had finished a single play I stood like one born blind, on whom a miraculous hand bestows sight in a moment.' 'Shakespeare was not a theatre poet, the stage was too narrow for his great intellect; truly the whole visible world was too narrow.' 'Shakespeare is a being of a higher order than myself, to whom I must look up and pay due reverence.'

The view that Shakespeare was too great to be identified with his own characters is thus finely put by an anonymous writer. 'Dowden, with picturesque license, divides the career of Shakespeare into four parts: "In the Work-

shop," "In the World," "Out of the Depths," and "On the Heights." It is true that Shakespeare's themes and manners do fall under some such divisions; it is also true that the four divisions represent the natural stages of most men upon their pilgrim's progress. That Shakespeare himself *was* in the deep and darkness, and thence attained to the heights of "clear and solemn vision," is not sure or necessary; his powers being so great, he logically passed from stage to stage, as a dramatist, finding himself drawn from one to another by the natural growth of his genius. At each period of his life he handled the matters to which his genius was then equal. He saw that such is life, so shaped, moulded, influenced, determined; it may be that he stood aloof, not in the artistic selfishness of Goethe, but with a wide serenity, the student of humanity, understanding all, sympathising with all, but himself the master of it all. Hamlet, the perplexed and brooding Shakespeare? Prospero, the calm and royal Shakespeare? It might seem so were Shakespeare less "myriad-minded" than Coleridge called him; but that Shakespeare, feeling in his own heart and brain the passions of his creatures, should have portrayed them with this dramatic strength and sureness is almost incredible. A man, torn by the problems of evil, the injustice of the universal laws, the betrayal of innocence, the triumphs of the wicked, may write burning verse, the lyrics of a Shelley, the epic satire of a Byron, the mocking rimes of a Heine, the stately odes of a Leopardi; but these [Shakespeare's] tragedies are not the natural expression of a suffering or saddened spirit. They are too royally designed, too masterfully controlled, guided, rounded, finished. Rather, Shakespeare's supremacy lies in this—that he could see and understand so much, could pierce to the heart of so many passions, could realise the actual play of life, without falling in bondage to any power; so that we say of him that he is universal, and we dare not say what was his personality.'

Is Shakespeare to be identified with any of his characters?

It has been said that every phase of feeling lay within the scope of Shakespeare's intuition. There is no point of morals, of philosophy, of the conduct of life, that he has

not touched upon, no mystery that he has not probed.

His universality.

Life and death, love, wealth, poverty, the prizes of life and the way we gain them; the characters of men, the influences, overt and concealed, which affect their fortunes, the mysterious forces which baffle them, on all these questions Shakespeare has enriched the world with his thought. He had no importunate topic he was anxious to discuss, making him cram one part and starve another. He gave everything its due place; what was great he told greatly, and what was small subordinately. In his plays we find unalloyed mirth, bright and tender fancy, airy satire, ardent passion, questionings into the deep and terrible mysteries of life. And it is not merely that we find all this, but that in almost every play we have most diverse elements, the high and the low, the great and the little, the noble and the base, the sad and the merry, brought under the dominance of one dramatic purpose, united under the sway of some great thought or profound emotion.

The dialogue.

Another element of greatness is the perfect naturalness of the dialogue There are plenty of undramatic passages in Shakespeare, because drama had, in Elizabethan days, to combine the essay, invective and satire, rhetoric and philosophy with the strictly dramatic. But in dramatic dialogue Shakespeare is a past master in perfectly natural touches. Lowell says that 'Lear' v. 3, 309—'Pray you, undo this button: thank you, sir'—'coming where it does and expressing what it does, is one of those touches of the pathetically sublime of which only Shakespeare ever knew the secret.' 'In Shakespeare, who first set an example of that most important innovation,' writes De Quincey, 'in all his impassioned dialogues, each reply or rejoinder seems the mere rebound of the previous speech. Every form of natural interruption, breaking through the restraints of ceremony under the impulse of tempestuous passion; every form of hasty interrogative, ardent reiteration when a question has been evaded; every form of scornful repetition of the hostile words; every impatient continuation of the hostile statement; in short, all modes and formulae by which anger, hurry, fretfulness,

scorn, impatience, or excitement under any movement whatever, can disturb or modify or dislocate the formal bookish style of commencement—these are as rife in Shakespeare's dialogue as in life itself; and how much vivacity, how profound a verisimilitude, they add to the scenic effect as an imitation of human passion and real life, we need not say.'

And so one might continue. The subject is an inexhaustible one. If in six years Marlowe created English tragedy and English blank verse; in another ten years Shakespeare carried tragedy to its highest possible development, and made a blank verse, which was chiefly dramatic in virtue of its rhetoric (as in his own Marlowan play of 'Richard III.'), into a verse that was the most perfect medium of dramatic, and especially tragic, expression possible. Marlowe was always much more of a poet than a dramatist; Shakespeare's superiority to him in poetry is only surpassed by his infinite superiority in drama. Of his non-dramatic poetical powers the highest expression is seen in the songs of his plays and in the 'Sonnets,' one of the finest of which we quote here:

'Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove:
O no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.'

Decline of the Drama.

The decline of the drama among Shakespeare's contemporaries and still more among his successors will best be seen by means of a comparison or contrast with him. His masterpieces 'hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age

and body of the time his form and pressure.' In them, again, we find the most wonderful characterisation: men and women are revealed to us, even to the inmost depths of their souls, not by the descriptions and analysis of the dramatist, but by their own speeches and actions. Characters grow and develop before our eyes; we see the effects upon them of life and experience and circumstance; we see the influence of character upon character. In these plays we have life, not in fragments, but as a whole and in its entirety. We find—another mark of strict fidelity to life—humour and pathos commingled. The clown is at the graveside in 'Hamlet,' the fool is by the frantic Lear, and this with psychological reason, for when the stimulus is too strong, emotion must be relieved, or the organ will either cease to respond or shatter. But Shakespeare's reason was dramatic, not psychological; and from the playwright's standpoint the blending of smiles and tears was not only justified by its truth to life, it was an evidence of consummate skill in the artist, who could thus increase the capacity to realise pain by a temporary relaxation of the tension. Lastly, there is in Shakespeare an appreciation of the grandeur of moral excellence and a deep sense of the invisible world. He never preaches or moralises, but he does better: he shows us that the way of the transgressor is hard, and that the punishment of sin is certain, if not immediate.

Marks of decay.

The changes that were supervening in the drama, even among Shakespeare's contemporaries, are traceable to causes which imply a departure from some or all of his characteristics as enumerated above. In the first place, the climax had been reached, and in the nature of the case decline must follow. The phenomenon of the crest followed by the trough of the wave is as common in literature as in other departments of life. The patriotic outburst of national life, the first glow of freedom of mind and conscience, the first joy over the vast discoveries in the domains of mind and matter, had spent themselves, and reaction was inevitable. The Court, with a selfish pedant at its head, was a centre of evil rather than good influences, a school

for sycophants rather than for heroes. The nobler spirits, disgusted with sin and frivolity, ceased to believe in a union of beauty and culture sanctified by religion, and cast in their lot with Puritanism. The effect of this on the drama was that playwrights wrote for a lower and lower class of audience; most of them began to pander to its taste. Jonson made a vigorous stand against the tendency, but he lacked the Elizabethan insight into life as a whole; he depicted the 'humours' of character, not its entirety. He too often hated the men of his day, and hate gives no insight into character. Further, through lack of insight, men lost the power of stimulating the emotions by natural means, and so they fetched unnatural horrors, as we see in Webster and later in Ford. And playgoers, having once felt abnormal stimulus, craved like inebriates for more and more. Finally, the moral standard sank. Society was deteriorating; and the representation of purity and holiness became distasteful to men whose lives outraged them.

A play of Jonson's.

A brief sketch of the plot of one of Jonson's plays will be the best introduction to a survey of his position. 'Epicene, or The Silent Woman' (1609) is a comedy of rough mirth. The fun hinges on the 'humour' of crusty old Morose, who cherishes an equal hatred for noise and for his noisy nephew Dauphine, who is his heir. To spite the latter he wishes to marry, but fears the tongue of a wife. By Dauphine's means the silent girl Epicene is introduced to him; and Morose is so charmed with her taciturnity, and her soft low voice in the few words she utters, that he straightway weds her. The marriage ceremony over, Epicene develops an unexpected loquacity, which, with the chatter and quarrels of Dauphine's confederates, nearly drives old Morose wild. He seeks the help of the law to try and get a separation, but in vain. At last the nephew promises to free his uncle on condition of receiving a large allowance and being made absolute heir. Morose gladly consents. Then Dauphine reveals the plot he has contrived with Epicene, of which the others are unaware—she is a boy in girl's clothing.

'The romantic license as to time and place,' says J. A Symonds, 'favoured the Shakespearian grasp of character in evolution. Macbeth could not grow from a bluff general into a world-wearied tyrant, Timon from a generous spendthrift into a cynical man-hater, Antony from a bold politician into a woman's plaything, in a single day. Given but twenty-four hours for the dramatic action, and fixed types of character, which do not grow, but are analysed, become inevitable. Now Jonson was so far a classic by culture and instinct that he adhered to the unities. . . . His mechanical handling of character belonged, therefore, in a measure to his ideal of art' The Jonsonian comedy has variety of incident; it is in characterisation that it suffers by contrast with Shakespeare's. The range of characters is limited by the range of 'humours'; certain fixed types appear over and over again. Moreover, given certain circumstances we can shrewdly guess what certain characters will do. They are labelled, the jealous man, the ambitious man, the braggart, and so on, and such they remain. There may be *more* characterisation in Jonson's comedies than in Shakespeare's, but the characters are photographed with a kodak. Characters that have exasperating 'humours' become exasperating themselves when they go out of the play the same as they came in: the law of comedy is that it must please. Hampered as he is by the unities, Jonson can only 'hold the mirror up'—and put it down again.

His limitations

After Jonson it is not necessary, and it is not a pleasant task, to trace the decline of the drama in detail. To the marks of decay already mentioned has to be added the deterioration of blank verse, which at last became indistinguishable from prose chopped up into lengths. The closing of the theatres put an end to playwriting from 1642 to 1660; consequently there was no unbroken tradition or gradual evolution in connection with Restoration drama. Apart from a few 'tragi-comedies'—the blending of tragedy and comedy seemed then sufficiently abnormal to require a special label—the severance of tragedy and

Drama after the Restoration

comedy was in marked contrast with their intermingling in Elizabethan drama, and the fact is significant. The ideal of the Elizabethan stage was, as has been seen, the representation of nature and life in their infinite variety; if the Restoration stage had any such ideal it disguised the fact so successfully as to give the impression that it was bent on representing in its tragedy an impossibly heroic state of life, and in its comedy the manners of its own corrupt society. Tragedy, after vainly striving to give vitality to the artificial and unhealthy style of the 'heroic play' of Dryden and others, reverts in some degree to earlier native examples, only, however, to sink into a state of impotence, ill concealed by a rigid adherence to the arbitrary code of rules that governed the pseudo-classic French stage. Comedy adheres more to the ancient spirit, and, elastically lending itself to the tone and taste of the times without sacrificing the laws of its own being, has a longer existence. Henceforward prose is its chosen medium, as blank verse is (though not without exceptions) that of tragedy. Towards the close of the seventeenth century the comedy of manners attained to great distinction in the hands of Congreve, whose masterpiece, 'Love for Love' (1695), has been called the most brilliant pure comedy of manners in the English language. Unfortunately his wit, in which he is unsurpassed, is the handmaid of immorality, in which, however, he is not the worst offender of his day. In the eighteenth century, Addison's 'Cato' (1713) has a spurious reputation in tragedy, due to the political circumstances of the hour. Comedy flared up for a time in the hands of Goldsmith and Sheridan; the former's 'She Stoops to Conquer' (1773) and the latter's 'The Rivals' (1775) and 'The School for Scandal' (1777) may still be seen on the stage. But with them the legitimate popular drama in pure literature died.

CHAPTER V.

FROM SPENSER TO MILTON (1579-1660 A.D.)

THE year 1579 marks the upward limit of the Elizabethan period as indisputably as the year 1660 marks its close. For in 1579, along with two notable works in Elizabethan prose, Sir Thomas North's 'Plutarch' and Lyly's 'Euphues,' there appeared Spenser's 'Shepherd's Calendar,' accepted then and ever since as the harbinger of our great Elizabethan poetry. It has seemed best in this work to collect all drama into one chapter; but it must be remembered that Elizabethan drama, as *poetry*, is one of the greatest glories of Elizabethan poetry; and it may almost be said that all later drama, written for the popular stage, hardly excepting Dryden's, is negligible as poetry. Matthew Arnold believes that it is possible to gauge the worth of poetry by test lines of unquestioned perfection. Tried in this way, Elizabethan verse, although often written without any view of publication, and only seeing the light after the writer's death (as in the case of Sir Philip Sidney), will be found to possess the hall-mark of the highest poetry, that indefinable something which seems to elude us if we attempt to lay our finger on it, and which we none the less certainly feel to be present in some works and absent from others. Present it unmistakably is in our Elizabethan poetry; intermittently and fitfully present, no doubt, in much of it, especially in the poetical miscellanies, and in the somewhat similar collections of individual work; but never absent for long, never very far away. Take, for

Elizabethan poetry.

an instance, 'A Sweet Lullaby' from the 'The Arbor of Amorous Devices' (1597).

'Come little babe, come silly soul,
Thy father's shame, thy mother's grief,
Born as I doubt to all our dole,
And to thyself unhappy chief:
    Sing lullaby and lap it warm,
    Poor soul that thinks no creature harm.

Thou little think'st and less dost know
The cause of this thy mother's moan;
Thou want'st the wit to wail her woe,
And I myself am all alone;
    Why dost thou weep, why dost thou wail,
    And know'st not yet what thou dost ail?

Come little wretch, ah silly heart,
Mine only joy; what can I more?
If there be any wrong thy smart,
That may the destinies implore;
    'Twas I, I say, against my will;
    I wail the time, but be thou still.

And dost thou smile? oh, thy sweet face!
Would God himself he might thee see!
No doubt thou soon wouldst purchase grace,
I know right well, for thee and me.
    But come to mother, babe, and play;
    For father false is fled away.

Sweet boy, if it by fortune chance
Thy father home again to send,
If death do strike me with his lance,
Yet mayst thou me to him commend;
    If any ask thy mother's name,
    Tell how by love she purchased blame.

Then will his gentle heart soon yield;
I know him of a noble mind;
Although a lion in the field,
A lamb in town thou shalt him find;
    Ask blessing, babe! be not afraid;
    His sugared words have me betrayed.

Then mayest thou joy and be right glad,
Although in woe I seem to moan;
Thy father is no rascal lad,
A noble youth of blood and bone;
    His glancing looks, if once he smile,
    Right honest women may beguile.

Come little boy and rock asleep;
Sing lullaby and be thou still;
I that can do naught else but weep
Will sit by thee and wail my fill.
God bless my babe, and lullaby
From this thy father's quality!'

The writer of this exquisite little poem was at the pains to immortalise himself anonymously.

The method here adopted, in dealing with this strikingly abundant and magnificent poetic output, is to take Spenser and Milton as typical of Elizabethan poetry, and then to trace the principal changes that supervened before the Restoration. If the student will cast his thought back for a moment to the evil days upon which English poetry had fallen since Chaucer, he will not wonder that such 'numbers' as the following took even the expectant by storm:

'Up, then, Molpomene! the mournfulst Muse of nyne,
Such cause of mourning never hadst afore;
Up, grieslie ghostes! and up my rufull ryme!
Matter of myrth now shalt thou have no more;
For dead shee is, that myrth thee made of yore.
Dido, my deare, alas! is dead,
Dead, and lyeth wrapt in lead.
O heavie herse!
Let streaming teares be poured out in store;
O carefull verse!

Shepheards, that by your flocks on Kentish downes abyde,
Waile ye this wofull waste of Nature's warke,
Waile we the wight whose presence was our pryde;
Waile we the wight whose absence is our carke,
The sonne of all the world is dimme and darke:
The earth now lacks her wonted light,
And all we dwell in deadly night.
O heavie herse!
Breake we our pypes, that shrild as loude as Larke;
O carefull verse!

. . . .

But maugre death, and dreaded sisters deadly spight,
And gates of hel, and fyrie furies forse,
She hath the bonds broke of eternall night,
Her soule unbodied of the burdenous corpse
Why then weepes Lobbin so without remorse?
O Lobb! the losse no longer lament;
Dido nis dead, but into heaven hent.
O happye herse!
Cease now, my Muse, now cease thy sorrowes source;
O joyfull verse!

Why wayle we then? why weary we the Gods with playnts,
As if some evill were to her betight?
She raignes a goddesse now among the saintes,
That whilom was the saynt of shepheards light,
And is enstalled now in heavens hight.
  I see thee, blessed soule, I see
  Walke in Elisian fieldes so free.
  O happy herse!
Might I once come to thee (O that I might!),
  O joyful verse!'

Edmund Spenser was a Londoner by birth—

'mery London, my most kyndly Nurse,
That to me gave this life's first native sourse,
Though from another place I take my name,
An house of auncient fame'

(he was related to the Spencers of Althorpe)—and a Cambridge man by training. He was at Cambridge during some severe Puritanical struggles and probably then received his Puritan bent. Taking his M.A. in 1576 he went to the North for a time, and apparently there fell in love with 'Rosalind,' 'the widow's daughter of the glen' ('Shep. Cal,' April 26). The same eclogue calls him 'the southern shepherd's boy'—a probable reference to the friendship and patronage of Sir Philip Sidney, to whom the whole 'Calendar' is dedicated. In the June eclogue 'Hobbinol' bids him

Spenser, 1552-1599.

'Forsake the soyle that so doth thee bewitch:
Leave me those hilles where harbrough nis to see,
Nor holy-bush, nor brere, nor winding witche:
And to the dales resort, where shepheards ritch
And fruictfull flocks bene everywhere to see'

Spenser came south, for he was in London in 1579 and had been received into the house of Sidney's uncle Leicester (the Prince Arthur of the 'Faery Queen'). In 1580 he went to Ireland, then in rebellion, with Lord Grey (the Artegall of the 'Faery Queen' V.), and must have seen the massacre of Smerwick Fort, which he vindicated in his 'View of the Present State of Ireland.'

Henceforth he resided mostly in Ireland, but paid visits to England for the publication of his great poem in 1589 and 1595. He was clerk of the council of Munster, and about 1586 he was granted the manor and ruined castle of Kilcolman. During Tyrone's rebellion in 1598, when Spenser had just been made Sheriff of County Cork, Kilcolman was sacked and burnt. Spenser and his wife escaped, but he died the following January in London.

Apart from the 'Shepherd's Calendar' and the 'Faery Queen' Spenser's most notable poems are 'Mother Hubberd's Tale,' a satire on court life, and the 'Amoretti,' a series of eighty-eight sonnets, and 'Epithalamion' or marriage song, both celebrating the lady who became his wife.

'The Shepherd's Calendar.'

The reading public are quite right in regarding Spenser as the poet of the 'Faery Queen,' but the 'Shepherd's Calendar' cannot be passed over in any story of English literature because of its historic importance. The work consists of twelve pastoral eclogues, in which the principal interlocutors are Colin Clout (Spenser), and Hobbinol (Gabriel Harvey, a college friend of Spenser's). In an introductory epistle, not by the poet but by another friend, three remarks occur on which we may conveniently hang a few more. This inspired 'introducer' says that 'in my opinion it is one special prayse of many, whych are dew to this Poete, that he hath laboured to restore, as to their rightfull heritage, such good and natural English words, as have been long time out of use and almost cleane disherited.' Jonson, on the other hand, is of opinion that 'Spenser, in affecting the ancients, writ no language.'

Spenser's poetic diction.

Unfortunately Spenser's zeal was not according to knowledge. Professor Herford has analysed the diction of the 'Calendar,' and divides the unusual words into five classes: (1) those derived from Middle English literature, (2) from dialects, (3) Elizabethan colloquialisms, (4) literary and learned words, (5) coinages of Spenser's own. The words borrowed from earlier authors are often incorrectly used, e.g. *yede*, went, is used for the infinitive, 'go.' It is maintained by Spenser's apologists that there

was no standard English in his day and that it was necessary for him to invent a poetic diction of his own. It may be conceded that the invented diction accords well on the whole with his subjects, but that only suggests the further question whether subjects and diction alike were not rather too much 'behind the times': of which more anon. In any case some of Spenser's contemporaries seem not to have fared badly with the 'Queen's English' of their day.

Two other quotations from 'the epistle' directly raise the question of the importance of the 'Calendar': 'he termeth the Shepheards Calendar, applying an olde name to a new worke'; and: 'the best and most auncient Poetes devised this kind of wryting, being both so base for the matter, and homely for the manner, at the first *to trye theyr habilities*.' What is new in these pastoral eclogues is the adaptation of the old 'Kalendrier des Bergers' to the purposes of poetical allegory, and the partial attuning of the eclogues, as Douglas did his prologues to the 'Aeneid,' to the changing seasons. The second quotation makes it clear that the 'Calendar' is Spenser's great experiment in diction and versification. The experiment was necessary and useful but not altogether successful: necessary, because of Wyatt's and Surrey's limitations in both subject and diction, and because their experiments had not been worthily followed; useful, because they gave the poet practice, facility, and confidence; not altogether successful, because they confirmed him in affected archaisms that hindered rather than helped him.

Spenser's prolonged residence in Ireland left its mark upon his poetry. 'The bulk of the "Faery Queen" as we have it,' says Church, 'was composed in what to Spenser and his friends was almost a foreign land—in the conquered and desolated wastes of wild and barbarous Ireland. . . . Spenser was a learned poet; and his poem has the character of the work of a man of wide reading, but without books to verify or correct. It cannot be doubted that his life in Ireland added to the force and vividness with which

Ireland in Spenser's poetry.

Spenser wrote. . . . In Ireland, Englishmen saw, or at any rate thought they saw, a universal conspiracy of fraud against righteousness, a universal battle going on between error and religion, between justice and the most insolent selfishness. . . . The realities of the Irish wars and of Irish social and political life gave a real subject, gave body and form to the allegory. There in actual flesh and blood were enemies to be fought with by the good and true. There in visible fact were the vices and falsehoods, which Arthur and his companions were to quell and punish. There in living truth were *Sansfoy*, and *Sansloy*, and *Sansjoy*; there were *Orgoglio* and *Grantorto*, the witcheries of *Acrasia* and *Phaedria*, the insolence of *Briana* and *Crudor*. And there, too, were real knights of goodness and the gospel—Grey, and Ormond, and Ralegh, the Norreyses, St. Leger, and Maltby—on a real mission from Gloriana's noble realm to destroy the enemies of truth and virtue.'

'The Faery Queen.'

The 'Faery Queen' is a magnificent fragment of six complete books and some detached cantos of a seventh. Afraid lest the design and plan of the first three books might not be clear to their readers, Spenser, when he published them in 1590, added a letter to Sir Walter Ralegh giving necessary explanations. 'In the person of Prince Arthur I set forth magnificence in particular; which virtue, for that (according to Aristotle and the rest) it is the perfection of all the rest, and containeth in it them all, therefore in the whole course I mention the deeds of Arthur applicable to that virtue, which I write of in that book. But of the twelve other virtues I make twelve other knights the patrons, for the more variety of the history: of which these three books contain three. The first of the Knight of the Red Cross, in whom I express Holiness; the second of Sir Guyon, in whom I set forth Temperance; the third of Britomartis, a lady knight, in whom I picture Chastity. [The fourth of Cambel and Triamond, Friendship; the fifth Artegall, Justice; the sixth Sir Calidore, Courtesy.] But because the beginning of the whole work seemeth abrupt and as depending upon other antecedents, it needs that ye know the occasion of these three knights'

several adventures. For the method of a poet historical is not such as of an historiographer. . . . The beginning therefore of my history, if it were to be told by an historiographer, should be the twelfth book, which is the last; where I devise that the Faery Queen kept her annual feast twelve days; upon which twelve several days the occasions of twelve several adventures happened, which being undertaken by twelve several knights are in these twelve books severally handled and discoursed.

'The first was this. In the beginning of the feast, there presented himself a tall clownish young man, who falling before the Queen of Faeries desired a boon (as the manner then was) which during the feast she must not refuse: which was that he might have the achievement of any adventure, which during that feast should happen; that being granted, he rested himself on the floor, unfit through his rusticity for a better place. Soon after entered a fair lady in mourning weeds, riding on a white ass, with a dwarf behind her leading a warlike steed, that bore the arms of a knight, and his spear in the dwarf's hand. She falling before the Queen of Faeries complained that her father and mother, an ancient King and Queen, had been by a huge dragon many years shut up in a brazen castle, who thence suffered them not to issue: and therefore besought the Faery Queen to assign her some one of her knights to take on him that exploit. Presently that clownish person upstanding desired that adventure; whereat the Queen much wondering, and the Lady much gainsaying, yet he earnestly importuned his desire. In the end the Lady told him, that unless that armour which she brought would serve him (that is, the armour of a Christian man specified by Saint Paul, v. Ephes.) that he could not succeed in that enterprise: which being forthwith put upon him with due furnitures thereunto, he seemed the goodliest man in all that company, and was well liked of the Lady. And eftsoons taking on him knighthood, and mounting on that strange courser, he went forth with her on that adventure: where beginneth the first book, viz.

What happened before Book I.

A gentle knight was pricking on the plain, etc.'

Book I. Book I. relates the adventures and ultimate triumph of the Redcross Knight and the Lady, Una. As they journey they fall in with the hypocrite Archimago, who succeeds in separating them. The knight meets Duessa and her lover Sansfoy, kills the 'Sarazin,' and journeys on with the false Duessa, who takes him to the House of Pride, where he defeats Sansjoy, and then escapes from Duessa. She however rejoins him, when he is surprised by the giant Orgoglio and thrown into his dungeons. Meanwhile Una, wandering in search of her knight, takes old Archimago, cunningly disguised, for him. The 'Sarazin' Sansloy fights Archimago and seizes her, but is in turn deprived of her by the forest satyrs. After further wanderings she meets her knight's dwarf, who informs her of his master's imprisonment in Orgoglio's castle. At this point Arthur appears and offers to rescue him. He kills Orgoglio, and rescues the Redcross Knight. After Arthur's departure they meet a young knight fleeing from Despair, who, attacked by the Redcross Knight, would have overcome him too but for the timely intervention of Una, who takes him to the House of Holiness. Here he is rested and prepared for his encounter with the dragon (see p. 79), and then, after a fierce and prolonged conflict, he defeats and destroys him. Una's father and mother are released, and Una and her knight are married.

It is impossible to continue even to outline the plot and it is unnecessary, for so little is the connection between the different books that a critic recently advised readers to pass straight from the first book to the sixth and then back to the third. Before we pass to criticism, let the student read or intone the following passages again and again, until he feels the full beauty of their music, bearing in mind the while that Spenser is the first great master of metrical effects in English poetry. Leigh Hunt in his 'Imagination and Fancy' has 'A Gallery of Pictures from Spenser,' to each of which he has added its 'character' and the name of the painter of whose genius it reminded him. We quote three of these.

(1) 'A Knight in bright armour looking into a cave.

Character: A deep effect of *chiaroscuro*, making deformity visible. Painter, Rembrandt (I. i. 14).

'But, full of fire and greedy hardiment,
The youthful Knight could not for ought be staide:
But forth unto the darksom hole he went,
And looked in: his glistring armor made
A little glooming light, much like a shade;
By which he saw the ugly monster plaine,
Half like a serpent horribly displaide,
But the other half did womans shape retaine,
Most loathsome, filthie, foule, and full of vile disdaine.'

(2) The Cave of Despair. Character: Savage and Forlorn Scenery, occupied by Squalid Misery. Painter: Salvator Rosa (I. ix. 33-6).

'Ere long they come where that same wicked wight
His dwelling has, low in an hollow cave,
Far underneath a craggie clift ypight,
Darke, dolefull, dreary, like a greedy grave,
That still for carrion carcases doth crave:
On top whereof ay dwelt the ghastly Owle,
Shrieking his balefull note, which ever drave
Far from that haunt all other chearefull fowle;
And all about it wandring ghostes did wayle and howle.

And all about old stockes and stubs of trees,
Whereon nor fruit nor leafe was ever seene,
Did hang upon the ragged rocky knees;
On which had many wretches hanged beene,
Whose carcases were scattred on the greene,
And throwne about the clifts. Arrived there,
That bare-head knight, for dread and dolefull teene,
Would faine have fled, ne durst approchen neare;
But th'other forst him staye, and comforted in feare.

That darksome cave they enter, where they find
That cursed man, low sitting on the ground,
Musing full sadly in his sullein mind:
His griesie lockes, long growen and unbound,
Disordered hong about his shoulders round,
And hid his face, through which his hollow eyne
Lookt deadly dull, and stared as astound,
His raw-bone cheekes, through penurie and pine,
Were shronke into his jawes, as he did never dine.

His garment, nought but many ragged clouts,
With thornes together pind and patched was,
The which his naked sides he wrapt abouts;
And him besides there lay upon the gras
A drearie corse, whose life away did pas,

All wallowd in his own yet luke-warme blood,
That from his wound yet welled fresh, alas!
In which a rusty knife fast fixed stood,
And made an open passage for the gushing flood.'

(3) Charissa or Charity. Character: Spiritual Love. Painter: Raphael (I. x. 30-1).

'She was a woman in her freshest age,
Of wondrous beauty, and of bounty rare,
With goodly grace and comely personage,
That was on earth not easie to compare;
Full of great love, but Cupids wanton snare
As hell she hated; chaste in worke and will:
Her necke and brests were ever open bare,
That ay thereof her babes might sucke their fill;
The rest were all in yellow robes arayed still.

A multitude of babes about her hong,
Playing their sportes, that joyd her to behold;
Whom still she fed whiles they were weake and young,
But thrust them forth still as they wexed old:
And on her head she wore a tyre of gold,
Adorned with gemmes and owches wondrous fayre,
Whose passing price uneath was to be told:
And by her side there sate a gentle payre
Of turtle doves, she sitting in an yvory chayre.'

Appreciation.

The Spenserian stanza was created by adding an Alexandrine (a line of six feet) to the stanza used by Chaucer in his 'Monk's Tale.' Its supreme merit is that it exactly suits Spenser's manner. It is liquid, fluent, luxurious; notable for its 'fluidity and sweet ease'; admirable for conveying impressions of languor, melody, gentle music, beauty and repose. The great sounding Alexandrine at the close of each stanza seems to sum up the verse, as though just there, at the end of each nine lines, were a strong and clear pause. Spenser obeys the law laid down for him by the stanza he created for himself: the sense almost always pauses with the natural pause in the metre; each stanza is usually complete in itself, and gives us either a complete picture, or a complete portion of a picture in many parts. With the smallest amount of care in the selection of books and cantos it is always easy to enjoy oneself in Spenser; indeed there is a certain danger of being lulled into a too easy sensuous enjoyment of mere word-music without

food enough or labour enough for the mind. He is *facile princeps* in abundance and richness of detail and incident. His imagination is as fecund as it is beautiful. If we are content to 'skip' and to 'dip' we shall find abundant 'gold-hoards': lines and stanzas of silvery melody, musical cadences, perfect portraits of women, conceptions of rare imaginative beauty.

On the other hand the 'Faery Queen' has very serious defects. It has a double allegory: a moral or subjective allegory, which is pretty continuously present; and a political or objective allegory which is only fitfully present. Hazlitt said that the allegory 'won't bite': one is sometimes tempted to wish that it would, for it does something far worse, it growls. The allegory spoils the story, and the story mars the allegory. Again, the poem has no unity. Doubtless there was a certain unity in the poet's original conception: both in connection with his professed object, 'to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline' and 'to portray in Arthur the image of a brave knight perfected in the twelve private moral virtues,' as well as in the relation of the various books and adventures to the Faery Queen's commission. But taking the poem as it stands, we are bound to admit that there is no such unity in the execution. After Book ii. the part played by Arthur is at times insignificant. Even the Faery Queen herself might be taken out of the poem without materially damaging it. Spenser made the fatal mistake of choosing a wrong model in Ariosto, whom it was his hope to 'overgo.' It is evident—one sentence in the letter to Ralegh is sufficient evidence: 'Ariosto comprised both a good governor and a virtuous man in his Orlando'—that Spenser misunderstood and misinterpreted his model, whose 'Orlando Furioso' is a great artistic success, whereas the 'Faery Queen' is a failure *as a whole*. Lastly, it has been said that Spenser in the world of poetry, like Sidney in the world of action, was 'born out of due time.' The faults of his great work are thus his misfortune rather than his fault. The 'ends of the ages' met over him. If he had only had 'that supreme gift of insight and invention which enables a poet to blend conflicting ideas into

one organic whole!' What he lacked was vision and judgment, not poetic power: the deep vision to see with Chaucer that medievalism was doomed, or with Shakespeare that it was in its death-agony; the judgment to select a modern, actual, new theme which might have been the real epic of that great age.

Except for any truth there might be in the charge that Milton 'to party gave up what was meant for mankind,' he belongs, in spite of chronology, to the glorious earlier Elizabethan period, and not to the later period of partial decline. Therefore we take him here. He was, like Spenser, a born Londoner, and was sent to St. Paul's School. He is the chief glory of Christ's College, Cambridge, which he left in 1632. Then he lived quietly at his father's house at Horton in Buckinghamshire for six years, travelled on the continent for more than a year, returned home in 1639 because of the troubled state of affairs in England, devoted himself almost exclusively to political work and prose writing until the Restoration, being Latin Secretary to the Council of State from 1649, and afterwards was, fortunately, allowed to end his days in peace. Milton's life, like that of Dryden and others, divides itself into three periods, and the varying character of his writings in the three periods shews how greatly his political and other connections affected his literary work. Up to 1638 is the period of the minor poems; from 1639 to 1660 is that of the prose works and the sonnets, from 1660 to his death that of the major poems. In the case of a man like Milton, whose work has been the subject of keen discussion and dissension not unmixed with bitterness, it is of the last importance that we should at the outset form a just estimate of the spirit of the man. Two or three quotations from early works afford the means of doing so. The sonnet written at the age of twenty-three closes with these two lines:

John Milton, 1608-1674

'All is, if I have grace to use it so,
As ever in my great Task-master's eye.'

In September, 1637, he wrote to Charles Diodati:

'What God may have determined for me I know not; but this I know, that if he ever instilled an intense love of moral beauty into the breast of any man, He has instilled it into mine.' And in 1641 he wrote in a prose tract: 'I was confirmed in this opinion, that he who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem.' 'As ever in my great Task-master's eye,' 'an intense love of moral beauty,' 'ought himself to be a true poem':—we may agree with Milton's opinions, or disagree; we may like him and his poetry, or we may dislike them equally—but these sayings come from his heart, and give the true clue to his life and work.

Milton's First Period.

The noteworthy poems of the years before 1639 are 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso,' 'Comus' and 'Lycidas.' The two first named stand in a class by themselves in our literature. There is nothing like them before Milton, there is nothing fit to compare with them since his day. The beauty of the matter is almost surpassed by the technical excellences of the manner. 'They satisfy the critics and they delight mankind,' and that is certainly the lot of very few poems. They are too long to give in full here, but the following extracts will give some idea of their movement:

'But come, thou Goddess fair and free,
In heaven yclept Euphrosyne,
And by men heart-easing Mirth. . . .
And in thy right hand lead with thee
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty;
And if I give thee honour due,
Mirth, admit me of thy crew,
To live with her and live with thee
In unreproved pleasures free;
To hear the lark begin his flight,
And, singing, startle the dull night
From his watch-tower in the skies,
Till the dappled dawn doth rise;
Then to come, in spite of sorrow,
And at my window bid good-morrow,
Through the sweetbriar or the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine. . . .
Oft listening how the hounds and horn
Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn,

From the side of some hoar hill,
Through the high wood echoing shrill:
Sometimes walking, not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,
Right against the eastern gate
Where the great Sun begins his state,
Robed in flames and amber light,
The clouds in thousand liveries dight:
While the ploughman near at hand
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe,
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.'

'But let my due feet never fail
To walk the studious cloister's pale,
And love the high embowèd roof,
With antique pillars massy-proof,
And storied windows richly dight,
Casting a dim religious light.
There let the pealing organ blow
To the full-voiced choir below
In service high and anthems clear,
As may with sweetness through mine ear
Dissolve me into ecstasies,
And bring all Heaven before mine eyes.
And may at last my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage,
The hairy gown and mossy cell,
Where I may sit and rightly spell
Of every star that heaven doth shew,
And every herb that sips the dew,
Till old experience do attain
To something like prophetic strain.'

The student should examine these pieces with the greatest care for the sake of the perfect *technique*. It will be seen that the verse is octosyllabic, and the art consists not only in varying the lilt of the measure to suit the pervading tone of each piece throughout, but also in varying the movement and sound of each line in accordance with the changes in the thought. The subtler variations can only be felt. The more obvious are the frequent use of 'catalectic' (*i.e.* wanting the first syllable) lines, such as

'Right against the eastern gate,'

and 'To the full-voiced choir below';

and the substitution of a trochee for an iambus in the first foot:

'Casting a dim religious light.'

It will be observed also that the two poems are parallel and antithetic in tone and construction throughout: they tell of the interests, joys, and pleasures of life looked at from two opposite points of view.

'Comus' and 'Lycidas.'

In 'Comus' Milton produced what is not only incomparably the finest masque ever written, but also among the greatest of his own works. Comus, in this masque, is the god of Debauch, born of Bacchus and Circe. The heroine, 'The Lady,' loses her brothers in a forest and is taken captive by the lewd god, whose arts, however, can avail nothing against one guarded as she is by chastity and virtue; by the help of a spirit, who watches over her, and of Sabrina the nymph of the Severn, her brothers find and release her, wresting the magician's poisonous draught from him and putting him and his crew to flight. In this way Milton allegorically depicts the endeavour of incontinent vice to overcome and corrupt virtue; it is even alleged that the 'Revel-god is a representative of those whom the poet actually regarded as the living votaries of the view of life which he abhorred.' In 'Lycidas,' the beautiful elegy, written under the form of a pastoral, in memory of his college friend, Edward King, Milton speaks sternly of the corruptions of the church, in words which find a fit place in the mouth of one who was to bid farewell for twenty years to masque and pastoral and idyll, and betake himself to stern political conflict, to controversy and struggle, through which he was destined to pass before he returned to the Muses as the poet of 'Paradise Lost.'

Milton's Second Period.

Milton's second period is one of prose interspersed with a few sonnets. In his prose works, 'wherein knowing myself inferior to myself, led by the genial power of nature to another task, I have the use, as I may account, but of my left hand,' his fundamental idea is liberty—liberty from a lower law only to come under a higher law. He himself divides his prose works into three classes: those dealing (*a*) with religious

liberty, as in the Church Government controversy of 1641; (*b*) with domestic liberty, as in the divorce pamphlets, the 'Tractate on Education,' and the 'Areopagitica'; (*c*) with political liberty, as in the 'Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.' They vary in manner from the loftiest strains and most harmonious cadences permissible in prose to abuse that would now be termed worthy only of Billingsgate Market; but it must be remembered that abuse was universal in the polemics of that day. Amid the distractions of the time Milton found no leisure for poetry outside 'the sonnet's scanty plot of ground':

'when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The thing became a trumpet; whence he blew
Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!'

As a sonneteer Milton is noteworthy as the first Englishman to adhere consistently (with one exception) to the Petrarchan form of the sonnet, which avoids the final riming couplet so common in his predecessors.

'TO CYRIACK SKINNER, UPON HIS BLINDNESS.

Cyriack, this three-years-day these eyes, though clear
To outward view of blemish or of spot,
Bereft of light, their seeing have forgot;
Nor to their idle orbs doth sight appear
Of sun, or moon, or star, throughout the year,
Or man, or woman. Yet I argue not
Against Heaven's hand or will, nor bate a jot
Of heart or hope, but still bear up and steer
Right onward. What supports me, dost thou ask?
The conscience, friend, to have lost them overplied
In liberty's defence, my noble task,
Of which all Europe rings from side to side.
This thought might lead me through this world's vain mask
Content, though blind, had I no better guide.'

'Paradise Lost.'

To the general public (who, however, do not read him) Milton is the poet of 'Paradise Lost,' as Spenser is the poet of the 'Faery Queen,' and the general public is right. Without 'Paradise Lost' Milton would be only what Sackville, Chatterton, or Keats is, a poet of magnificent but unfulfilled promise.

As early as 1641 he had in one of his pamphlets declared his intention of devoting himself to the composition of a great poetical work, but at first he favoured the subject of King Arthur and the dramatic form. By 1642 he had made four drafts of a work on the subject of Paradise Lost, but still adhered to the form of drama. How and when he finally selected his subject and the epic form is not known; the latter choice was certainly a wise one. The poem was completed by 1665 and published in 1667.

The argument.

The argument of 'Paradise Lost' can be given in short space. Satan, after his revolt and overthrow in heaven, attempts to encourage his followers with the hope of revenging themselves on man. He raises Pandemonium and summons a council, as the result of which he himself undertakes the search for the new world and the new creature, Man. Then the scene is changed to heaven, where God the Father shews Satan to the Son, informs him of his mission, and foretells his success in ruining mankind. The Son offers himself as a redemptive sacrifice and is accepted. Meanwhile Satan, directed by Uriel, reaches the Earth, and perching in the shape of a cormorant on the Tree of Life overhears from Adam the prohibition,

> 'not to taste that only Tree
> Of Knowledge, planted by the Tree of Life,'

and resolves on the mode of their temptation.

> 'All is not theirs, it seems;
> One fatal tree there stands, of Knowledge called,
> Forbidden them to taste. Knowledge forbidden?
> Suspicious, reasonless! Why should their Lord
> Envy them that? Can it be sin to know?
> Can it be death? And do they only stand
> By ignorance? Is that their happy state,
> The proof of their obedience and their faith?
> O fair foundation laid whereon to build
> Their ruin! Hence I will excite their minds
> With more desire to know, and to reject
> Envious commands, invented with design
> To keep them low, whom knowledge might exalt
> Equal with gods. Aspiring to be such,
> They taste and die: what likelier can ensue?'

This brings us to the close of the fourth book.

Raphael is sent to warn Adam of the impending danger, and, in reply to his questions, relates in detail the story of the war in heaven between the good and the evil angels, the defeat and expulsion of the latter by the Messiah, and the creation of the world and man. This, with the conversation that ensues, occupies the second four books. Book ix. contains the actual temptation and fall, and in Book x. the Son of God sentences and then clothes the transgressors. Sin and Death make a bridge over Chaos from Pandemonium to Earth, but God the Father foretells their ultimate destruction by his Son. The last two books contain a vision of the future revealed to Adam by Michael, and the expulsion from Paradise. 'Our ling'ring parents'

> 'Hand in hand, with wand'ring steps and slow,
> Through Eden took their solitary way.'

It is hoped that this brief analysis will give some idea of the strength and the weakness of Milton's conception.

Defects of 'Paradise Lost.'

Aristotle's formulation of the essentials of the epic has never been called in question: the epic treats of one great complex action in a grand style and with fulness of detail. 'Paradise Lost' treats of one great action in a grand style; but it fails in complexity and fulness of detail. The greatness, the universal interest, of the action is counterbalanced to some extent by the meagreness of material, and the difficulty of elaboration and invention in connection with such a theme. Consequently the narrative has backwaters and eddies. Too large a proportion of the poem is taken up with episodes: Books v.-vii. are a retrospective historical episode, Books xi. and xii. are mainly a prospective episode. Again, the description of the war in heaven in Books v. and vi. is in as distressingly bad taste as, on the other hand, Books i. and ii. are fine and unsurpassable. The poet enlists our sympathy, in far too great a degree, in the behalf of Satan. Possibly the subject chosen was more in accordance with Milton's character than with his poetic genius, and he would have achieved a greater success with a pagan subject. Lastly, his perpetuation of the Ptolemaic system of astronomy, for the sake of his argument;

his overweight of theology, often of a kind unpalatable even to those who take kindly to dogma; his domineering masterfulness in dealing with the relations of men and women; his awful lack of humour—all these are utterly unmodern.

Milton's poetic style.

But when all has been said that the most pertinacious devil's advocate can say, it is little enough against what can be urged on the other side. In speaking of the 'grand style' of the poem it is difficult to use temperate language. No one has ever attuned our language to such mighty harmonies as Milton; whether in rime or in blank verse he has given us some of the noblest word-music of which it is capable. The chief characteristics of 'Paradise Lost' may be summed up in the word 'sublimity.' The poet's imagination is lofty and his style grand, majestic and sonorous. Magnificent imagery with him seems to be merely the fit and natural accompaniment and expression of magnificent ideas. It is in his sublimest conceptions that his language most aptly fits his thought. When he deals with more commonplace matters (which is seldom enough), the effect is that of second-rate musical compositions played by a great artist on a splendid instrument. 'A feeling of spaciousness such as no other poet gives' is Lowell's description of the effect produced by the 'vistas and avenues' of Milton's verse. No one who reads 'Paradise Lost' can fail to be struck with this peculiar power of Milton. He can exercise it in half a dozen lines:

'Here let those
Who boast in mortal things, and wondering tell
Of Babel, and the works of Memphian kings,
Learn how their greatest monuments of fame
And strength and art are easily outdone
By spirits reprobate, and in an hour
What in an age they, with incessant toil
And hands innumerable, scarce perform.' *P. L.*, i. 692-699.

He can make us feel it in a few syllables:—

'Who would lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity?'—ii. 148.

Or he can sustain the spell through scores and scores of lines, as in Book xi. and elsewhere.

His blank verse

In 'Paradise Lost' Milton is our greatest artist, one might almost say architect, in blank verse. But in order fully to appreciate the art and distinction of Miltonic blank verse some preparation, not to say training, is needed. A part of such preparation is furnished by reading in succession the quotation from 'Gorboduc' on p. 45, and the quotations from Milton given below. In the latter the whole swing and movement of the verse is swayed by the movement of the thought in a way that can be felt by a delicate ear better than it can be described. Milton himself says that 'true musical delight consists only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another.' The full significance of this last phrase is perhaps not immediately apparent: for while it is obvious that 'the sense drawn out from one verse into another' means what is now conveniently termed 'overflow,' it is less obvious that 'variously' covers the varying position of the medial pause, and thus the varied medial cadences before that pause. In the earliest English blank verse the pause usually fell with wearisome monotony at the end of each line; Milton places it in every possible position. These two characteristics of his prosody, the 'overflow' and the varied medial cadences, are important elements in the upbuilding of the most delightful feature of his versification, his wonderful blank verse stanzas, which are expounded, as well as they can be, in the following quotation from an anonymous article. 'To analyse Miltonic blank verse in all its details would be the work of much study and prolonged labour. It is enough to indicate the fact that the most sonorous passages usually commence and terminate with interrupted lines, including in one organic structure periods, parentheses and paragraphs of fluent melody; that the harmonies are wrought by subtle and most complex alliterative systems, by delicate changes in the length and volume of syllables, and by the choice of names magnificent for their mere gorgeousness of sound. In these structures there are many pauses which enable the ear and voice to rest themselves, but none are perfect,

none satisfy the want created by the opening hemistich, until the final and deliberate close is reached. Then the sense of harmony is gratified, and we proceed with pleasure to a new and different sequence. If the truth of this remark is not confirmed by the following celebrated and essentially Miltonic passage, it must fall without further justification.'

'And now his heart
Distends with pride, and, hardening in his strength,
Glories: for never, since created man,
Met such embodied force as, named with these,
Could merit more than that small infantry
Warred on by cranes—though all the giant brood
Of Phlegra with the heroic race were joined
That fought at Thebes and Ilium, on each side
Mixed with auxiliar gods; and what resounds
In fable or romance of Uther's son,
Begirt with British and Armoric knights;
And all who since, baptized or infidel,
Jousted in Aspramont, or Montalban,
Damasco, or Marocco, or Trebisond,
Or whom Biserta sent from Afric shore
When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
By Fontarabbia.' *P.L.*, i. 571-87.

Other features of Milton's versification might be specified, such as the wonderful use he makes of proper names, illustrated above and below; but a whole chapter would be required to do the barest justice to the subject. The degree in which the themes of his poetry appeal to us varies as vastly as our various characters and dispositions; but about the music of his verse and the technical perfection of his prosody there is no room for two opinions. Probably there is no better example of Milton's unsurpassed faculty of making the sound an echo to the sense than 'Paradise Regained,' ii. 337-365:

'He spake no dream; for, as his words had end,
Our Saviour, lifting up his eyes, beheld,
In ample space under the broadest shade,
A table richly spread in regal mode,
With dishes piled and meats of noblest sort
And savour—beasts of chase, or fowl of game,
In pastry built, or from the spit, or boiled,

Grisamber-steamed, all fish, from sea or shore,
Freshet or purling brook, of shell or fin,
And exquisitest name, for which was drained
Pontus, and Lucrine bay, and Afric coast
Alas! how simple, to these cates compared,
Was that crude apple that diverted Eve!
And at a stately sideboard by the wine,
That fragrant smell diffused, in order stood
Tall stripling youths rich-clad, of fairer hue
Than Ganymed or Hylas; distant more,
Under the trees now tripped, now solemn stood,
Nymphs of Diana's train, and Naiades
With fruits and flowers from Amalthea's horn,
And ladies of the Hesperides, that seemed
Fairer than feigned of old, or fabled since
Of faery damsels met in forest wide
By knights of Logres, or of Lyones,
Lancelot, or Pelleas, or Pellenore.
And all the while harmonious airs were heard
Of chiming strings or charming pipes; and winds
Of gentlest gale Arabian odours fanned
From their soft wings, and Flora's earliest smells.'

Elizabethan poetry at its best, as we have just seen it, 'was the flowering through art of a new faith and a new joy—a faith in the spiritual truths recovered by the Reformation movement, a joy in the world of nature and of human life as presented in the magic mirror of the Renaissance.' When party feeling grew strong, men lost, with the sense of unity, breadth of feeling and largeness of ideals. They thus readily fell into littlenesses; they aimed at novelties of expression more than at greatness of thought, and at remote analogy and even obscurity of language rather than depth of feeling and the grandeur of simplicity. From about 1625, to which date we have returned, to 1660 two developments in English poetry are especially to be noted: they fell into one another, but can best be dealt with apart: the flourishing of 'metaphysical' and of lyrical poetry. The former must be regarded as a sign of decadence; the latter as the true poetic flame that still burnt clear and bright until it could be passed on to Dryden and his school.

Poetry of the transition.

The lyrical poetry of this time does not surpass that of

the Elizabethans proper; it is chiefly noteworthy because it maintains such a high standard of excellence when so much other poetry was running to seed, as lyrism itself in the end tended to do.

The lyrists.

The principal names here are those of Carew, the eldest of the Caroline poets, Lovelace, Herrick, and Suckling, together with the religious lyrists, Crashaw and 'holy Mr. Herbert.' The temptation to quote the exquisite lyrics of these singers is so strong that it must be resisted—after all they are to be found in every collection—and we must be content with the hackneyed, but ever refreshing, 'To Althea from Prison' of Lovelace:

'When love with unconfined wings
 Hovers within my gates,
And my divine Althea brings
 To whisper at the grates;
When I lie tangled in her hair,
 And fettered to her eye,
The birds that wanton in the air
 Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round
 With no allaying Thames,
Our careless heads with roses bound,
 Our hearts with loyal flames,
When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
 When healths and draughts go free,
Fishes that tipple in the deep
 Know no such liberty.

When, like committed linnets, I
 With shriller throat shall sing
The sweetness, mercy, majesty,
 And glories of my King;
When I shall voice aloud, how good
 He is, how great should be,
Enlarged winds that curl the flood
 Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make,
 Nor iron bars a cage;
Minds innocent and quiet take
 That for an hermitage;
If I have freedom in my love,
 And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
 Enjoy such liberty.'

'It was characteristic of the fashion of the day to invent *verse-forms* of great intricacy and difficulty, the beauty of which was of less import to the writer than the oddity. Donne had set the example of these fantastic eccentricities, and the wanton way in which they were employed soon drove men of taste to the rigid use of the heroic couplet only.' That is a very partial explanation of the coming predominance of the heroic couplet, to which we return in the next chapter. Donne (1573-1631) had set the example to English poets, not only or chiefly in these formal eccentricities, but in all the marks of the so-called 'metaphysical' school. Dryden said of Donne in his 'Essay on Satire': 'He affects the metaphysics.' Dr. Johnson, in his life of Cowley, taking the hint from Dryden, extended the criticism to 'a race of writers that may be termed the metaphysical poets.' He says: 'This kind of writing, which was, I believe, borrowed from Marini and his followers, had been recommended by the example of Donne, a man of very extensive and various knowledge.' The initiative in England is due to Donne alone; dates render it impossible that he should have imitated Marini. Then Johnson lays out the chief characteristics of the style with justness and acumen. 'The metaphysical poets were men of learning, and to shew their learning was their whole endeavour. . . . If that be considered as wit which is both natural and new, that which, though not obvious, is, upon its first production, acknowledged to be just, if it be that which he that never found it, wonders how he missed; to wit of this kind the metaphysical poets have seldom risen. Their thoughts are often new, but seldom natural; they are not obvious, but neither are they just; and the reader, far from wondering that he missed them, wonders more frequently by what perverseness of industry they were ever found. . . . The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions. . . . Yet great labour, directed by great abilities, is never wholly lost; if they frequently threw away their wit upon false conceits, they likewise sometimes struck out unexpected truth:

The 'Metaphysical' Poets.

if their conceits were far-fetched, they were often worth the carriage. . . . If their greatness seldom elevates, their acuteness often surprises; if the imagination is not always gratified, at least the powers of reflection and comparison are employed.' If to this be added two other brief quotations, the student will have a comprehensive description of these literary curiosities. 'The metaphysical poets,' says Leslie Stephen, 'are courtier pedants. They represent the intrusion into poetry of the love of dialectical subtlety encouraged by the still prevalent system of scholastic disputation.' 'The opposite word "physical,"' writes Masson, 'would be in some respects more suggestive of the truth, one of the most obvious characteristics of the poets in question being a disposition to run everything they think of through a series of quaint physical analogies, emotionally inappropriate, though perceptible to a practised or erudite wit.'

Donne's principal followers in this kind of poetry were Crashaw, Herbert, Cleveland, and Cowley. But it must be understood that every poet between 1625 and 1660 had the 'metaphysical' taint, even the best lyrists, even Milton and Marvell. The worst possible examples of poetry of this kind are Cowley's 'Mistress' and Dryden's 'Upon the Death of the Lord Hastings,' the one too long (see, however, 'The Spectator,' No. 62) and the other too immature to quote. We give instead one of the most favourable specimens possible, from Donne's 'A Valediction forbidding Mourning.'

'Our two souls therefore, which are one,
Though I must go, endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to airy thinness beat.

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two,
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.

And though it in the centre sit,
Yet when the other far doth roam,
It leans and hearkens after it,
And grows erect as that comes home.

Such wilt thou be to me, who must
  Like th' other foot obliquely run,
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
  And makes me end where I begun.'

Elizabethan prose.

The men who did most for the development of English prose style in this period were Hooker and Bacon. At first two great dangers beset prose: the Latinised style of Ascham and the affected style of Lyly. Much interest attaches to the prose work of Lyly, who had a marked and, on the whole, not a beneficial influence on prose style almost up to the Restoration. But Hooker and Bacon did really great things for the development of our somewhat slowly forming prose; when alliteration, antithesis, 'unnatural natural history' were the order of the day, they shewed that English was as capable as the classics of subserving the highest purposes of language—that it was possible in English also to express the subtleties of thought in clear, straightforward, and uninvolved sentences, and, when necessary, to condense the greatest amount of meaning into the fewest possible words. Hooker's 'Ecclesiastical Polity' (1594) is the first publication in the English language to observe a strict methodical arrangement and at the same time to present a train of clear logical reasoning.

Periods of prose.

English prose from about 1580 to about 1700 may be roughly divided into three periods of forty years. We say 'roughly,' because literary periods and movements can never be more than roughly fitted with dates; they invariably overlap. It may be useful to call these three periods the periods of 'tentative' prose, of 'grand' prose, and of 'measured' prose respectively. In this chapter we have to deal with the first two only, and we take Bacon and Milton as their respective representatives.

Bacon, 1561-1626.

The intrinsic merit of Bacon's work in prose is unfortunately much greater than its influence. He essayed several kinds of writing and failed in none. In the unfinished fable of the 'New Atlantis,' devised, says his chaplain, 'to the end that he might exhibit therein a model or description of a

college, instituted for the interpreting of Nature and the producing of great and marvelous works for the benefit of man,' Bacon made one of the earliest attempts at allegorical prose romance, furnishing a model which might have been used by Bunyan and Swift. The work is also credited with having suggested the foundation of the Royal Society and of several similar associations abroad. In his 'Henry VII.' he wrote a historical prose, that has only to be compared with that of the Elizabethan chroniclers to see how great an advance it represents on any writing then to be found in the same department of letters. But if these two styles be regarded as variations of Bacon's philosophical style seen in the 'Advancement of Learning,' this still leaves him master of two utterly different styles, for neither of which is he beholden to any predecessor. His more connected style may well be illustrated by a few sentences from the 'New Atlantis':

'But then again there arose strong and great winds from the south with a point east; which carried us up (for all that we could do) towards the north, by which time our victuals failed us, though we had made good spare of them. So that finding ourselves in the midst of the greatest wilderness of waters in the world, without victual, we gave ourselves for lost men, and prepared for death. Yet we did lift up our hearts and voices to God above, who *sheweth His wonders in the deep*; beseeching him of His mercy, that as in the beginning He discovered the face of the deep, and brought forth dry land, so He would now discover land to us, that we might not perish. And it came to pass that the next day about evening, we saw within a kenning before us, towards the north, as it were thick clouds, which did put us in some hope of land; knowing how that part of the South Sea was utterly unknown; and might have islands or continents, that hitherto were not come to light.'

The style of Bacon's 'Essays' differs *in toto* from this. The 'Essays' appeared in three authorised editions during the author's life; their number increased from ten in the first to fifty-eight in the last, and the individual essays also were enlarged and partly rewritten. But even in their final form they have been compared to a 'succession of short barks.' Bacon's own description of them explains at once their origin and the

Bacon's 'Essays.'

peculiarities of their style: they are 'fragments of his conceits,' 'dispersed meditations,' 'brief notes set down rather significantly than curiously' (*i.e.* elaborately). In a word they are little more than note-book jottings classified and put into some order. They are 'not so much set compositions as collections of thoughts that have happily shaped themselves in epigrammatic and ornate phrase.' The following extract from the essay 'Of Expense' is a good illustration of Bacon's acute worldly wisdom and of its literary garb:

'Riches are for spending, and spending for honour and good actions. Therefore extraordinary expense must be limited by the worth of the occasion; for voluntary undoing may be as well for a man's country as for the kingdom of heaven; but ordinary expense ought to be limited by a man's estate, and governed with such regard as it be within his compass; and not subject to deceit and abuse of servants; and ordered to the best show, that the bills may be less than the estimation abroad. Certainly, if a man will keep but of even hand, his ordinary expenses ought to be but to the half of his receipts; and if he think to wax rich, but to the third part. It is no baseness for the greatest to descend and look into their own estate. Some forbear it, not upon negligence alone, but doubting to bring themselves into melancholy, in respect they shall find it broken. But wounds cannot be cured without searching. He that cannot look into his own estate at all, had need both choose well those whom he employeth, and change them often; for new are more timorous and less subtle. He that can look into his estate but seldom, it behoveth him to turn all to certainties. A man had need, if he be plentiful in some kind of expense, to be as saving again in some other: as if he be plentiful in diet, to be saving in apparel; if he be plentiful in the hall, to be saving in the stable; and the like. For he that is plentiful in expenses of all kinds will hardly be preserved from decay.'

Prose after Bacon.

Bacon's services to our prose can be rightly measured only when we remember the dearth of available models: it is not his fault that the excellent models he left in masculine, trenchant, vernacular English were neglected by those who had to carry on prose tradition. Not that he was altogether without followers: the character-writers of the seventeenth century, Overbury, Earle and the rest, seem largely to have taken Bacon for their model. But the representative prose authors from 1620 to 1660 cultivated the 'grand' style,

to the neglect of Hooker and Bacon, and the effect is often that of magnificent music played by a great composer on a poor instrument. The chief vice of their prose is seen in the fact that the second sentence in Milton's first prose work contains four hundred words. The greatest writers are the worst offenders: Milton and Jeremy Taylor do not know that the sentence is the prose unit, as the line is the poetical unit, and confuse the sentence with the paragraph. Moreover, they, and Sir Thomas Browne still more, indulge much too freely in ugly latinised words and classical constructions. 'To Milton,' says Henry Craik, 'prose was an unnatural medium, which he never subdued to his purposes. As a prose writer he commands admiration only where he enlists sympathy. He used the weapon provided for him by his age with consummate power: but it was a weapon which he seized as he found it, which owed its force to the arm that wielded it, and which he left with no sharpness added to its temper, no new polish to its surface, no new facility in its contrivance.'

The following sentence-paragraph is a good illustration alike of Milton's merits and defects:

'Then amidst the hymns and hallelujahs of saints, some one may perhaps be heard offering at high strains in new and lofty measures, to sing and celebrate Thy Divine mercies and marvellous judgments in this land throughout all ages; whereby this great and warlike nation, instructed and inured to the fervent and continual practice of truth and righteousness, and casting far from her the rags of her old vices, may press on hard to that high and happy emulation to be found the soberest, wisest, and most Christian people at that day, when Thou, the Eternal and shortly expected King, shalt open the clouds to judge the several kingdoms of the world, and distributing national honours and rewards to religious and just commonwealths, shall put an end to all earthly tyrannies, proclaiming Thy universal and mild monarchy through heaven and earth; where they undoubtedly, that, by their labours, counsels, and prayers, have been earnest for the common good of religion, and their country, shall receive above the inferior orders of the blessed, the regal addition of principalities, legions, and thrones into their glorious titles, and in supereminence of beatific vision, progressing the dateless and irrevoluble circle of eternity, shall clasp inseparable hands with joy and bliss, in overmeasure for ever.'—'Of Reformation in England.'

CHAPTER VI.

THE AGE OF DRYDEN (1660-1700 A.D.).

Periods of literary history.

THE Restoration conveniently marks the approximate date of one of the two mightiest changes in English literature and certainly of the most abrupt cleavage. It is of the last importance that the student should have in his mind a clear outline of the history of our literature from 1579 to about 1832. From 1579 to 1660 we have the Elizabethan period, the characteristic marks of which have been studied, and of which Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser may be taken as the representatives. From 1660 to 1798 the English Classical or 'correct' school was supreme; its representatives are Dryden, Pope, and Johnson. From 1798 to 1832 we have the Romantic period, which may be represented by Wordsworth. There are so many points of resemblance between the Elizabethan and the Romantic periods that the latter is often called the Second Romantic period. If the fact of the resemblance is clearly borne in mind, the nomenclature is not of very great moment; and it is just as necessary to remember that there are important differences between the two 'romantic' periods as that there are fundamental resemblances. At present we are concerned with the cleavage and contrast between the Elizabethan and the Classical periods. This contrast extends to each division of literature: poetry, drama, and prose. The changes that took place are perhaps most easily expounded and exemplified in connection with poetry; but the fact must be clearly borne in mind that changes of a similar and equally far-reaching character are seen in drama and in prose. Further, the changes in poetry affect equally the matter and the form, the latter including both metre and diction. It is to be particularly noted

that subject-matter, metre, and diction did not change *pari passu*, though the changes under all three heads culminated in Pope; nor were the 'classicists' themselves so quickly conscious of the changes in matter and in diction as of the changes in metre, upon which from the first they prided themselves. The changes in metre must therefore be dealt with in this chapter, whilst it will be better to defer diction and subject-matter to a later stage (see chap. vii.).

The terms 'Classic' and 'Romantic.'

A word of explanation is necessary as to the selection and meaning of the terms 'classic,' 'correct,' 'romantic.' The 'classic' writers prided themselves on their imitation of the Greek and Latin (especially the latter) *classical* authors, whom they regarded as the ultimate authority in matters literary: hence they delighted to call their epoch 'the Augustan age' of English literature. Their literary creed is concisely expressed by the critic Walsh, who had great influence on Pope, when he wrote to the latter in 1706: 'The best of the modern poets in all languages are those that have the nearest copied the ancients.' Nevertheless a much better word than 'classic' would be 'pseudo-classic.' Pope did not translate Homer from the Greek, but from the Latin version and the English of Chapman. 'Already Dryden,' says Dr. A. W. Ward, 'when in the hot haste of his literary life his better genius had found time to take counsel with itself, had recognised the truth that the French classical school was merely a French adaptation of classical rules—and supposed classical rules—into a code which was French rather than classical.' The term 'correct' again was applied by the classicists to themselves and their poetry. Pope said to Spence: 'Walsh used to tell me that there was one way left of excelling; for though we had several great poets, we never had any one great poet who was *correct*, and he desired me to make that my study and aim.'

'Late, very late, correctness grew our care,
When the tired nation breathed from civil war,'

sings Pope himself, and adds

'Ev'n copious Dryden wanted, or forgot,
The last and greatest art, the art to blot.'

or, in other words, 'In me, Alexander Pope, correctness has, for the first time, attained its full and final consummation.' There is a danger of our adopting Pope's narrow meaning of 'correctness' and admitting his claim; a truer criticism recognises in Milton a far higher standard of correctness in the proper sense of the word. Lastly, the term 'romantic' was first applied in its present literary sense by the 'romantics' of the early nineteenth century. Pope and the 'Augustans' had used the word in a depreciatory sense (as they also used the word 'Gothic'), to mean 'sentimental,' almost at times as a vague antithesis of 'classical'; their successors took the despised word, and applied it triumphantly to themselves and those with whom they claimed kinship, the Elizabethans.

Contrast between Elizabethan and Classic versification.

We have already seen that Milton conceived true musical delight to consist 'only in apt numbers, fit quantity of syllables, and the sense variously drawn out from one verse into another, not in the jingling sound of like endings.' If we put over against this a quotation from Dryden (dedication of the 'Rival Ladies'), we shall see that these two leaders of the Elizabethan and Classic schools of poetry were agreed as to their respective characteristics. 'Rime,' writes Dryden, 'has all the advantages of prose besides its own. But the excellence and dignity of it were never fully known till Mr. Waller first taught it; he first made writing easily an art; first shewed us to conclude the sense most commonly in distichs [couplets]; which in the verse of those before him runs on for so many lines together that the reader is out of breath to overtake it.' It is evident that if this is Dryden's serious opinion and is confirmed by his contemporaries, it is a very important pronouncement for the understanding of their poetic standards and ideals. Fortunately the Classic writers leave us in no doubt on the point. Dryden, Addison, Pope, Prior, and Johnson repeat the same statements in other words. 'Even after Chaucer there was a Spenser, a Harrington, a Fairfax, before Waller and Denham were in being: and our numbers were in their nonage till these last appeared.' 'The

sweetness of English verse was never understood or practised by our fathers. . . . Everyone was willing to acknowledge how much our poesy is improved by the happiness of some writers yet living who first taught us to mould our thoughts into easy and significant words; to retrench the superfluities of expression; and to make our rhyme so properly a part of the verse, that it should never mislead the sense, but itself be led and governed by it.' 'Mr. Waller was indeed the parent of English verse, and the first that shewed us our tongue had numbers and beauty in it. . . . Verse before Mr. Waller was but downright prose tagged with rimes.' There can be no mistaking the plain meaning or the self-gratulating tone of these passages: 'Chaucer, Spenser,'—Shakespeare apparently was not regarded as a poet—'and others did their poetical best in their day, but unfortunately for them they lived in the dark ages of English poetry, before the glorious light of day was revealed; the harbinger of that day was Waller, and we are enjoying its resplendent noontide.'

Edmund Waller, 1605-1687

And who was this Mr. Waller, who 'first made writing easily an art'? He was a relative of Cromwell's and in politics a veritable Vicar of Bray. Though we no longer lavish upon him the panegyrics of the Augustans, he has immense significance as the founder of the school of poetry of which we take Dryden and Pope as the chief representatives. In 1623, when Ben Jonson and Chapman and Drayton were the poets most in vogue, Waller wrote a long poem on the exciting incident of the moment, the danger Prince Charles had just escaped on the return voyage from Spain. Here are seven couplets from the poem 'On the Prince's Escape at St. Andero' [Santander]:

'What the prophetic Muse intends, alone
To him that feels that secret wound is known.
With the sweet sound of this harmonious lay,
About the keel delighted dolphins play;
So sure a sign of sea's ensuing rage,
Which must anon this royal troop engage;
To whom soft sleep seems more secure and sweet,
Within the town commanded by our fleet,

These mighty peers placed in the gilded barge,
Proud with the burthen of so brave a charge,
With painted oars the youths begin to sweep
Neptune's smooth face, and cleave the yielding deep:
Which soon becomes the seat of sudden war
Between the wind and tide that fiercely jar.'

'The prosody of such lines as these is quite undistinguishable from that of the Classic school from 1660 to the close of the seventeenth century. Dryden proceeded no further than this in the mere execution of the distich, and it was only in the hands of Pope that it received a further polish and rapidity.' We see clearly Waller's immense importance from the historic point of view, when we compare his verses above with the following lines from Ben Jonson's 'To the Memory of my beloved Master William Shakespeare' (prefixed to the First Folio), written in the same year and in the same metre, that is to say, in heroic couplets:

'And though thou hadst small Latin and less Greek,
From thence to honour thee, I would not seek
For names, but call forth thund'ring Æschylus,
Euripides, and Sophocles to us,
Pacuvius, Accius, him of Cordova dead,
To life again, to hear thy buskin tread,
And shake a stage; or when thy socks were on,
Leave thee alone for a comparison
Of all that insolent Greece or haughty Rome
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe.
He was not of an age, but for all time!
And all the Muses still were in their prime,
When, like Apollo, he came forth to warm
Our ears, or like a Mercury to charm!'

Or compare them with these lines from Chapman's 'Odyssey' (1615) in the same metre:

'Lately in Delos (with a charge of men
Arriv'd, that render'd me most wretched then,
Now making me thus naked) I beheld
The burthen of a palm, whose issue swell'd
About Apollo's fane, and that put on
A grace like thee; for Earth had never none
Of all her sylvan issue so adorn'd.
Into amaze my very soul was turn'd,

To give it observation; as now thee
To view, O virgin, a stupidity
Past admiration strikes me, join'd with fear
To do a suppliant's due, and press so near
As to embrace thy knees.'

Romantic and Classic heroic couplets.

Probably the reader's first impression may have been that Waller's lines are in a different metre from Jonson's and Chapman's, and indeed they are in the same metre so differently handled as to become practically a different metre. 'For,' as Herford says, 'nothing can be more unlike in effect than verse in which the sense runs freely on, and that in which a pause at the end of a line or couplet is habitual. In the latter case the rime, coinciding with the divisions of the sense, only accentuates its regularity, just as the recurring strokes of the drum emphasize the regular march of soldiers; in the former, the very symmetry of the rime throws off the unrestraint of the sense, as the same drum heightens the effect of an irregular march.' If Waller's lines are carefully compared with Jonson's and Chapman's; or, still better, if a book of Pope's 'Essay on Man' be compared with the same number of lines from Chapman's 'Odyssey' and the same number from Keats's 'Endymion'; some curious results will be arrived at. It is not possible to make an exhaustive comparison here, but one or two divergences will put the student on the right track. In the first place, each of Waller's (or Pope's) couplets is a stanza of two lines; whereas Jonson's and Chapman's lines, but for the rimes, more nearly resemble Milton's blank verse than any stanza. Waller has a stop of some kind at the close of each couplet; seven of the Romantic couplets have no stop of any kind at the close. Secondly, if the pause or 'overflow,' as the case may be, at the end of the first line of each couplet, be examined, it will be found that the pause is much more marked and 'overflow' much less common in Waller's lines than in Jonson's or Chapman's; and if we put Pope in place of Waller the contrast would be more striking. Such a thing as a full stop at the end of the first line of a couplet, as in Chapman's seventh line, could

hardly be paralleled in a Classic poet. And so one might continue. But mere figures cannot prove much in poetry, and it will be better to return and read even these short passages again and again until their utterly different *movement* is felt to the full.

The comparison extended

By limiting the comparison, as above, to the heroic couplets of the two schools, the points of difference are clearly focused, but they are also restricted within the narrowest possible bounds. If the limitation be removed and Romantic versification be compared with Classic versification generally, it will be understood that the differences will be much more marked. It will be seen that the versification of the one school admits every possible irregularity in its feet and in its lines, while that of the other is characterised by the formal 'correctness' on which it prided itself. Their choice of metre is equally significant: the chosen metre of the Classics is that which allows least freedom and scope to the individuality of the writer, the heroic couplet; if the Romantics have a chosen metre, it is blank verse, the most complete antithesis to the couplet, but it would be truer to say that Romanticism tries all metres and binds itself slave to none. The watchword of the one school, in versification as in all else, is liberty, that of the other is order. Liberty may tend towards license, and such a tendency it was in the later Elizabethan times which necessitated the Classic reaction, in itself a good and healthy change and full of promise for the future of literature, though its dominance was unduly prolonged. One word of caution: let the student never forget that form in poetry, though of its essence, is but the outward and visible sign; and that changes in form, such as those we have been considering, are but tokens of deep changes in the matter and spirit of literature, about which more will be said in the next chapter.

John Dryden, 1631-1700.

John Dryden was, like Chaucer, a great craftsman in English letters; a man at first none too well equipped for his profession, but blessed with an open mind that could learn and did learn much; a man who almost always got up from a piece of work wiser

than he sat down to it; who warmed to his work, though he never seemed to bring inspiration to it, until he almost became inspired by it; one who, though his lot might have been cast in happier times, made the most of his opportunities, and has left a record in the *history* of English poetry and prose that can never be effaced. For a large share of the credit that he himself gave to Waller belongs to Dryden in poetry, together with as large a share of the credit that is sometimes given to Sprat and Cowley in prose.

Dryden's literary life falls into three distinct periods. The first, ending with 1681, is mainly the period of drama. Dryden disciplined himself into writing dramas—at one time he covenanted to produce three a year for one company—because they paid, but his real genius lay in other directions. The second period, from 1681 to the Revolution, saw the publication of all his greatest works. The third, from 1689 to his death, was the period of miscellaneous production—'fables,' translations, elegies, writing to order for the booksellers. It may be useful to mention all his principal works with brief comments. Of his dramas, among the most important are his 'heroic plays,' of which the best are 'The Indian Emperor' and 'The Conquest of Granada.' He was afterwards so ashamed of the rant and fustian that abound in these that he ridiculed one of them in his 'Mac Flecknoe'; but they served to perfect his powers of versification in the couplet in preparation for the great satires. The 'heroic plays' were admirably burlesqued in the Duke of Buckingham's 'Rehearsal.' In non-dramatic poetry, 'Annus Mirabilis' celebrates, in the heroic quatrain, the year of the Fire of London (1666); 'Religio Laici' is a reasoned confession of faith; 'The Hind (Church of Rome) and the Panther' (Church of England) is a controversial defense of his newly-adopted Roman Catholicism; 'Alexander's Feast' is a magnificent ode written for St. Cecilia's Day; 'The Fables' are mainly paraphrases and modernisations of Boccaccio and Chaucer; the 'Translation of Virgil' is a more faithful and spirited piece of work than Pope's 'Homer.'

Of the above, only the 'Religio Laici' and the 'Hind and the Panther' are disputable masterpieces; but the three pieces not yet named, 'Absalom and Achitophel' (Monmouth and Shaftesbury), 'The Medal,' and 'Mac Flecknoe' (Shadwell), all produced within the space of twelve months (1681-2), are indisputably the masterpieces of English satire. 'Dryden is our greatest reasoner in verse'; we admit the claim, while deprecating reasoning in verse. But when the reasoning is joined with satire, we acknowledge at once that what we are reading is executed with infinitely greater precision and finish than would have been possible in prose. But let the reader judge for himself. Here are three extracts of sufficient length: the first is from the 'Hind and the Panther' (the Bear is the Independent, the Hare the Quaker, the Ape the Freethinker, the Lion the King, the Boar the Anabaptist, and Reynard the Arian); the second is the character of Zimri (Buckingham, the author of the 'Rehearsal') in 'Absalom and Achitophel'; the third is the opening of 'Mac Flecknoe' (Shadwell).

His masterpieces.

'The bloody Bear, an independent beast,
Unlicked to form, in groans her hate expressed.
Among the timorous kind the quaking Hare
Professed neutrality, but would not swear.
Next her the buffoon Ape, as atheists use,
Mimicked all sects and had his own to chuse;
Still when the Lion looked, his knees he bent,
And paid at church a courtier's compliment.
The bristled baptist Boar, impure as he,
But whitened with the foam of sanctity,
With fat pollutions filled the sacred place
And mountains levelled in his furious race;
So first rebellion founded was in grace.
But, since the mighty ravage which he made
In German forests had his guilt betrayed,
With broken tusks and with a borrowed name,
He shunned the vengeance and concealed the shame,
So lurked in sects unseen. With greater guile
False Reynard fed on consecrated spoil;
The graceless beast by Athanasius first
Was chased from Nice, then by Socinus nursed,
His impious race their blasphemy renewed,

And Nature's King through Nature's optics viewed;
Reversed they viewed him lessened to their eye,
Nor in an infant could a God descry.
New swarming sects to this obliquely tend,
Hence they began, and here they all will end.
What weight of ancient witness can prevail,
If private reason hold the public scale?
But, gracious God, how well dost Thou provide
For erring judgments an unerring guide!
Thy throne is darkness in the abyss of light,
A blaze of glory that forbids the sight.
O teach me to believe Thee thus concealed,
And search no farther than Thy self revealed;
But her alone for my director take,
Whom thou hast promised never to forsake!
My thoughtless youth was winged with vain desires;
My manhood, long misled by wandering fires,
Followed false lights, and when their glimpse was gone,
My pride struck out new sparkles of her own.
Such was I, such by nature still I am;
Be Thine the glory and be mine the shame!'

'Some of their chiefs were princes of the land;
In the first rank of these did Zimri stand,
A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind's epitome:
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts, and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chymist, fiddler, statesman, and buffoon;
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking,
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.
Blest madman, who could every hour employ
With something new to wish or to enjoy!
Railing and praising were his usual themes,
And both, to show his judgment, in extremes:
So over violent or over civil
That every man with him was God or Devil.
In squandering wealth was his peculiar art;
Nothing went unrewarded but desert.
Beggared by fools whom still he found too late,
He had his jest, and they had his estate.
He laughed himself from Court; then sought relief
By forming parties, but could ne'er be chief:
For spite of him, the weight of business fell
On Absalom and wise Achitophel;
Thus wicked but in will, of means bereft,
He left not faction, but of that was left.'

'All human things are subject to decay
And, when Fate summons, monarchs must obey.
This Flecknoe found, who, like Augustus, young
Was called to empire and had governed long,
In prose and verse was owned without dispute
Through all the realms of Nonsense absolute.
This aged prince, now flourishing in peace
And blest with issue of a large increase,
Worn out with business, did at length debate
To settle the succession of the state;
And pondering which of all his sons was fit
To reign and wage immortal war with wit,
Cried, "'Tis resolved, for Nature pleads that he
Should only rule who most resembles me.
Shadwell alone my perfect image bears,
Mature in dulness from his tender years;
Shadwell alone of all my sons is he
Who stands confirmed in full stupidity.
The rest to some faint meaning make pretence.
But Shadwell never deviates into sense.
Some beams of wit on other souls may fall.
Strike through and make a lucid interval;
But Shadwell's genuine night admits no ray,
His rising fogs prevail upon the day.
Besides, his goodly fabric fills the eye
And seems designed for thoughtless majesty,
Thoughtless as monarch oaks that shade the plain
And, spread in solemn state, supinely reign.
Heywood and Shirley were but types of thee,
Thou last great prophet of tautology.
Even I, a dunce of more renown than they,
Was sent before but to prepare thy way,
And coarsely clad in Norwich drugget came
To teach the nations in thy greater name.'"

'Nowhere else is the easy wing-stroke of the couplet, at once propelling the poet through the upper air and slapping his victim in the face at every beat, so triumphantly and coolly manifested.'

Dryden's satire

In an interesting passage of his 'Essay on Satire' Dryden gives us his own recipe: 'How easy it is to call rogue and villain, and that wittily. But how hard to make a man appear a fool, a blockhead, or a knave, without using any of those opprobrious terms! . . . This is the mystery of that noble trade. . . . Neither is it true that this fineness of raillery is offensive:

a witty man is tickled while he is hurt in this manner, and a fool feels it not. . . . There is a vast difference betwixt the slovenly butchering of a man and the fineness of a stroke that separates the head from the body and leaves it standing in its place. A man may be capable, as Jack Ketch's wife said of his servant, of a plain piece of work, of a bare hanging; but to make a malefactor die sweetly was only belonging to her husband. I wish I could apply it to myself, if the reader would be kind enough to think it belongs to me. The character of Zimri in my "Absalom" is, in my opinion, worth the whole poem. It is not bloody, but it is ridiculous enough, and he for whom it was intended was too witty to resent it as an injury. . . . I avoided the mention of great crimes, and applied myself to the representing of blind sides and little extravagances, to which, the wittier a man is, he is generally the more obnoxious.' Perhaps the reader will not 'be kind enough to think it belongs to' Dryden on all occasions; but when Dryden comes to be compared with Pope—and the supremacy in verse satire certainly lies between them—it will be seen how much the nearer of the two he is to the ideal satirist. Rich, massive, intensely vigorous and virile is Dryden. The red-hot energy which with him ensures a liquid ease of expression and gives warmth and life to all the satirical portraits; their inimitable precision which, though not so minutely exact as Pope's, has a range of application far beyond his, and an ease and freedom peculiar to themselves; the clear reasoning so convincing to the reader, perhaps all the more because it requires so little effort to follow; the utter absence of any cold timidity or drowsy hesitation of expression—these are the great qualities of Dryden's best poetry.

No English man of letters has ever received such glowing tributes of admiration from contemporaries and successors as 'glorious John.' Pope avowed that he learned versification wholly from Dryden's works, Dryden who

'taught to join
The varying verse, the full-resounding line,
The long majestic march, and energy divine.'

Gray describes the vigour of Dryden's style as a car borne wide over the fields of glory by

'Two coursers of ethereal race
With necks in thunder clothed and long-resounding pace:'

and asseverates that 'if there is any excellence in my numbers, I have learned it wholly from that great poet.' And Landor wrote of him:

'None ever crossed our mystic sea
More richly stored with thought than he;
Though never tender or sublime,
He wrestles with and conquers Time.'

Prose 1660-1700.

In turning from poetry to prose we do not turn away from Dryden, who may truly be called the father of modern prose style. Sprat and Cowley and (he himself added) Tillotson anticipated him in prose as Waller did in poetry; but in each case, it may be said, Dryden made the reformed style acceptable and brought it into acceptance. In a memorable passage Matthew Arnold compares the three periods of prose which we have labelled 'tentative,' 'grand,' and 'measured' respectively. 'When we find Chapman, the Elizabethan translator of Homer, expressing himself in his preface thus: "Though truth in her very nakedness sits in so deep a pit, that from Gades to Aurora and Ganges few eyes can sound her, I hope yet those few here will so discover and confirm, that, the date being out of her darkness in this morning of our poet, he shall now gird his temples with the sun,"—we pronounce that such a prose is intolerable. When we find Milton writing: "And long it was not after, when I was confirmed in this opinion, that he, who would not be frustrate of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem,"—we pronounce that such a prose has its own grandeur, but that it is obsolete and inconvenient. But when we find Dryden telling us: "What Virgil wrote in the vigour of his age, in plenty and at ease, I have undertaken to translate in my declining years; struggling with wants, oppressed with sickness, curbed in my genius, liable to be misconstrued in all I write,"—then we

exclaim that here at last we have the true English prose, a prose such as we would all gladly use if we only knew how.' We have gone back in verse in large measure to the ways of the Elizabethans, but in prose the reforms in syntax and sentence-moulding introduced after the Restoration still hold their own. Addison and Swift, Johnson and Goldsmith, may have completed the prose reforms of Dryden, but we can never go back upon his work. Take him where you will, apart from minor differences in idiom, you will find him always the same, always clear and always modern. The following extract is from the 'Essay of Dramatic Poesy' (1667):

'As for Jonson, to whose character I am now arrived, if we look upon him while he was himself (for his last plays were but his dotages), I think him the most learned and judicious writer which any theatre ever had. He was a most severe judge of himself, as well as others. One cannot say he wanted wit, but rather that he was frugal of it. In his works you find little to retrench or alter. Wit and language, and humour also, in some measure, we had before him; but something of art was wanting to the drama till he came. He managed his strength to more advantage than any who preceded him. You seldom find him making love in any of his scenes, or endeavouring to move the passions; his genius was too sullen and saturnine to do it gracefully; especially when he knew he came after those who had performed both to such a height.

Humour was his proper sphere; and in that he delighted most to represent mechanic people.

He was deeply conversant in the Ancients, both Greek and Latin; and he borrowed boldly from them. There is scarce a poet or historian, among the Roman authors of those times, whom he has not translated in "Sejanus" and "Catiline." But he has done his robberies so openly, that one may see he fears not to be taxed by any law. He invades authors like a monarch; and what would be theft in other poets, is only victory in him. With the spoils of these writers, he so represents old Rome to us, in its rites, ceremonies, and customs, that if one of their own poets had written either of his tragedies, we had seen less of it than in him. If there was any fault in his language, 'twas that he weaved it too closely and laboriously in his serious plays. Perhaps, too, he did a little too much *Romanise* our tongue, leaving the words which he translated almost as much

Latin as he found them: wherein, though he learnedly followed the idiom of their language, he did not enough comply with ours.

If I would compare him with Shakespeare, I must acknowledge him the more correct poet, but Shakespeare the greater wit. Shakespeare was the Homer, or father of our dramatic poets; Jonson was the Virgil, the pattern of elaborate writing; I admire him, but I love Shakespeare.'

When prose like this is compared with that of Dryden's predecessors, it will be seen that some of the reforms he effected are these. He swept away, for the most part, parentheses, quotations, involutions, qualifications and afterthoughts *in the sentence*; they must be separate sentences: he made the sentence the unit of prose style, in place of the paragraph. He did away with the Latin constructions which could only lead to obscurity in an uninflected language. He banished from the vocabulary all words not generally intelligible, whether Latinisms or barbarisms. He avoided quaint phrases, far-fetched analogies, complicated antitheses. He cultivated the native Saxon idiom, and achieved a greater ease of style, in accordance with the needs of the time.

But there was one contemporary of Dryden's, the author of the greatest imaginative work of his age, whose work stands clear of the literary tradition and tendencies of the time. Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress from this World to that which is to Come' unites many of the merits of the grand prose of Milton and the measured prose of Dryden. Its author was a poor tinker, who, after his conversion, became a local preacher, spent twelve years in Bedford jail through the tender solicitude of the regular clergy, and after his release became a resident pastor to the Baptists of Bedford, known as 'Bishop Bunyan.' It is a moot point whether this humble Puritan is not the greatest of English allegorists: probably most people who are competent to judge would say that he is. His voice has gone out into all the world, for the 'Pilgrim's Progress' has been translated into more languages than any other book except the 'Bible' and the 'De Imitatione Christi' of Thomas à

John Bunyan, 1628-1688.

Kempis. Even sturdy old Tory Dr. Johnson ranked it with 'Don Quixote' and 'Robinson Crusoe' as the only books one wishes longer than they are. He asked Bishop Percy's little daughter what she thought of it: she had not read it. 'No! then I would not give one farthing for you,' and he put her down from his knee. All things considered, it is one of the miracles of literature. The allegory is maintained with unparalleled consistency. The style is simple, without slang or bad grammar. The power and 'grip' of the narrative must have been felt by every Englishman. Every impartial critic, pagan and Christian alike, has appreciated the exalted merits of the work, both in allegorical narrative and in simple manly yet beautiful prose. Our illustration of Bunyan's style may be called 'Christian and Hopeful in Doubting Castle.'

'Now, night being come again, and the giant and his wife being in bed, she asked him concerning the prisoners, and if they had taken his counsel: to which he replied, They are sturdy rogues; they choose rather to bear all hardships than to make away with themselves. Then said she, Take them into the castle yard to-morrow, and show them the bones and skulls of those that thou hast already dispatched, and make them believe ere a week comes to an end, thou wilt tear them in pieces, as thou hast done their fellows before them.

So when the morning was come, the giant goes to them again, and takes them into the castle yard, and shows them as his wife had bidden him. These, said he, were pilgrims, as you are, once, and they trespassed on my grounds, as you have done; and, when I thought fit, I tore them in pieces; and so within ten days I will do you. Go, get you down to your den again. And with that he beat them all the way thither. They lay, therefore, all day on Saturday in a lamentable case, as before. Now, when night was come, and when Mrs. Diffidence, and her husband the giant, was got to bed, they began to renew their discourse of their prisoners; and, withal, theold giant wondered that he could neither by his blows nor counsel bring them to an end. And with that his wife replied, I fear, said she, that they live in hopes that some will come to relieve them; or that they have picklocks about them, by the means of which they hope to escape. And sayest thou so, my dear? said the giant. I will therefore search them in the morning.

Well, on Saturday, about midnight, they began to pray, and continued in prayer till almost break of day.

Now, a little before it was day, good Christian, as one half amazed, brake out into this passionate speech: What a fool, quoth he, am I thus to lie in a stinking dungeon, when I may as well walk at liberty! I have a key in my bosom, called Promise, that will, I am persuaded, open any lock in Doubting Castle. Then said Hopeful, That is good news: good brother, pluck it out of thy bosom, and try.

Then Christian pulled it out of his bosom, and began to try at the dungeon door, whose bolt, as he turned the key, gave back, and the door flew open with ease, and Christian and Hopeful both came out. Then he went to the outward door that leads into the castle yard, and with his key opened that door also. After that he went to the iron gate, for that must be opened too; but that lock went damnable hard, yet the key did open it. They then thrust open the gate to make their escape with speed; but that gate, as it opened, made such a creaking that it waked Giant Despair, who, hastily rising to pursue his prisoners, felt his limbs to fail; for his fits took him again, so that he could by no means go after them. Then they went on, and came to the King's highway, and so were safe, because they were out of his jurisdiction.'

CHAPTER VII.

THE AGE OF POPE (1700-1740 A.D.).

A prosaic age.

Although the early eighteenth century may well be called the 'age of prose and reason,' its most typical representative is a poet; this seeming paradox is partly explained by the fact that Pope is the most prosaic of our great poets. Rossetti said that Pope's was 'a prose style twisted into verse.' Furious controversy has raged about the question, whether Pope was a poet at all; and again over the assertion that the largest part of his works, being 'of the didactic, moral and satiric' order, is 'not of the most poetic species of poetry.' What was no doubt meant by this assertion was that Pope's poetry was not of the highest or most imaginative kind, and in those terms the proposition would now receive universal assent; indeed the writers of that day, both in England and in France, may be held to prove it by their own statements. They furnish evidence, which is to us amusing by its ingenuousness, that they regarded poetry as 'a more affected prose subjected to rime.' Buffon said, in praise of certain verses, that they were as fine as fine prose. Dryden says in his 'Religio Laici':

> 'And this unpolished, rugged verse I chose,
> As fittest for discourse and *nearest prose*.'

Again in the Preface to his 'Fables,' he writes: 'my only difficulty is . . . to run them into verse or to give them the other harmony of prose.' Pope uses almost identical language in the design of his 'Essay on Man': 'I chose verse,' because 'I found I could express principles, maxims, or precepts more shortly this way than in prose itself.' If *poeta nascitur, non fit*, it is obvious that verse is not a

deliberate choice with him but a necessity; and that Dryden, in hesitating between verse and prose, was not in a poet's dilemma.

Compared with earlier ages.

It will probably help towards the understanding of the age of Pope, if we contrast it with the Elizabethan age, and compare it with the age of Dryden: this may also tend to confirm what has been already learnt about those ages. In Elizabeth's day Englishmen were just waking up to the vastness and fulness of existence; they thirsted for every cup, and grasped recklessly at the golden fruit of good and evil; they seemed to reel with an intoxicating sense of the immensity of life and the greatness of the world. The one quality they conspicuously lacked was temperance, sobriety. Hence the extraordinary brilliance, the many-coloured variety, the multifarious incongruity of their life wore them out so soon. Hence too their literature was inspired by passion and imagination; and form was partly disregarded in, partly made subservient to, the unrestrained expression of thought and feeling. But with the cooling of passion and emotion, with the replacement of spontaneity and 'abandon' by reserve and introspection, with fierce party feeling taking the place of patriotism, chief attention came to be directed to correctness and neatness of expression and the critical rules of art, which finally developed a cold exactness and perfection of form, unbroken by the sudden pauses and turns of thought natural to passion and imagination. On the cooling of creative and imaginative impulses reflection and criticism invariably supervene. Thus the age of Dryden is seen to be the commencement of a prolonged critical period, intervening between two great creative periods of our literature. All the tendencies developed in the age of Dryden become more pronounced in the age of Pope. Dryden himself perhaps was never altogether comfortable in the triumph of French standards in taste and French principles in criticism, though he did more than all others combined to bring it about. 'He was always like a deserter who cannot feel happy in the victories of the alien arms, and who would go back if he could to the camp where he

naturally belonged.' But Pope had no such qualms. His little finger was thicker than his master's loins.

The character of the age.

The age of Pope was outwardly more respectable than that of Dryden, but inwardly more rotten; it was an age of whited sepulchres. It mattered little that within it was full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness, so long as the outside was whited. Nothing mattered greatly so long as outward respectability was maintained. Open immorality is never so dangerous as a sham morality, and it is therefore no matter of surprise that imaginative literature in this age touched the lowest point it has reached in modern times 'It is an unnatural age, because licentious in every direction except that of the form which, by its own authority, it has chosen as the exponent of its very spirit and essence.' Swift said that 'a nice man is a man of nasty ideas.' Exactly in that sense and for that reason the age of Pope is 'a nice age.' Moreover, it was a time of political strife and uncertainty. The whole nation was divided for a time into Hanoverians and Jacobites; treason was so rife that no one could trust his neighbour. Almost all writers could be bought; even the best of them, with few exceptions, were in the pay or service of one political party or the other. Literature became the handmaid of politics and of statecraft.

Reflected in literature.

There is at least one respect in which 'Augustan' literature has a claim to high rank: it reflects faithfully the character of the age. It was a time marked by negation of faith, absence of enthusiasm, social and religious conformity to the conventionalities of respectability, a shallow rationalistic or theistic philosophy, and an engrossing absorption in town life to the exclusion of the healthier interests of the country. All these features equally mark its literature, which was almost exclusively didactic, moral and satiric. 'It is time enough,' wrote Pope in 1722, 'to like, or affect to like, the country, when one is out of love with all but one's self.' Queen Anne pastorals 'affect to like' the country, but 'a library and a poulterer's shop' furnish all their material. One word summarises

'Augustan' literature—common sense: common sense glorified, deified, beprosed, berimed, and bestanzaed almost out of all recognition of itself. 'Wit and fine writing,' says Addison after Boileau, 'doth not consist so much in advancing things that are new, as in *giving things that are known an agreeable turn*. It is impossible for us who live in the latter ages of the world to make observations in criticism, morality, or in any art or science, which have not been touched upon by others. We have little else left us, but to represent the *common sense of mankind in more strong, more beautiful, or more uncommon lights.*'

'True Wit is Nature to advantage dress'd,
What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd'—

the same thought again. The utmost brilliance of form combined with sheer banality of matter—that is Augustan literature. Its highest development at that time has been compared to flowers imitated in pearls and diamonds and precious stones. 'A noble language, an oratorical pomp, a classical correctness reign throughout. . . Men seized those universal and limited truths, which being situated between lofty philosophical abstractions and petty sensible details, are the subject-matter of eloquence and rhetoric, and form what we now-a-days call commonplaces. . . . Men had special need of setting their ideas in order, and of seeing them very distinctly in very clear phrases. Now that this need is satisfied, it has disappeared; we demand ideas, not arrangement of ideas.' But probably the best thing that has ever been said or written about Pope's epoch is Shairp's simile, every phrase of which vividly symbolises some one of its features. 'What most strikes one in the poetry of the Pope and Addison period, is its external character and its limited range of subjects. Literature appeared like a well-bred, elderly gentleman in ruffles and peruke, of polished but somewhat chilling manners, who met all warmth of feeling with the frost of etiquette, and whose conversation, restricted to certain subjects, touched but the surface of these, and even that in set phrases.'

'In set phrases,' that is, in 'poetic diction.' It will be remembered that the contrast between Romantic and Classic English poetry was to be dealt with under the heads of

versification, subject-matter, and diction. Versification was dealt with in Chapter VI.; subject-matter has been touched on above, and will be again in the chapter on the age of Wordsworth; it remains to say something of diction here. Poetic diction is that system of conventional titles, epithets and periphrases, which was recognised as proper to metrical composition in the eighteenth century. It originated in a desire for a language and imagery distinct from those ordinarily used in conversation and in prose, and was at first rather the reverse of conventional. When the Elizabethans referred to the the sun as 'Phoebus' and the moon as 'Diana,' these were in no wise hackneyed or conventional terms which must be used to the exclusion of others, but were intended partly to accustom the reader to the less familiar associations of the world of the imagination. If a wood was called a 'grove' it was no mere pedantic effort to use a more uncommon word. But in the 'Augustan' age, partly with a view to distinguish the language of poetry from that of prose (and we have seen how dangerously narrow the boundary had become), the direct naming of common (not vulgar) things came to be regarded as unpoetical. Hence arose conscious sophistications of language, the hall-mark of the freemasonry of poetry, which became at once rigid and rigorous. No one could be a poet, nothing could be poetry, without the equipment of this 'precious' jargon. It was no longer possible to speak of birds or men, except in prose; in poetry they became 'the feathered quire' and 'swains' respectively. Thus 'poetic diction' was a hardening into convention of what had once been spontaneous and natural; as such it deserves condemnation, since its use militates against the whole idea of poetry.

Poetic diction.

It must not be assumed from what has been said that the age of Pope is without excellences of its own. 'The literature of the reign of Queen Anne was the expression of the better mind of England when it had recovered itself through good sense and moderation of temper from the Puritan excess and from the Cavalier excess. Enthusiasm was discredited and

'Our excellent eighteenth century.'

faith had no wings to soar; but it was something to have attained to a sober way of regarding human life, and to the provisional resting-place of a philosophical and theological compromise. Addison's humane smile, Pope's ethics of good sense, and the exquisite felicity of manner in each writer, represent and justify the epoch.' Again, hear Matthew Arnold: 'A fit prose was a necessity; but it was impossible that a fit prose should establish itself amongst us without some touch of frost to the imaginative life of the soul. The needful qualities of a fit prose are regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. The men of letters, whose destiny it may be to bring their nation to the attainment of a fit prose, must of necessity, whether they work in prose or in verse, give a predominating, an almost exclusive attention to the qualities of regularity, uniformity, precision, balance. But an almost exclusive attention to these qualities involves some repression and silencing of poetry. We are to regard Dryden as the puissant and glorious founder, Pope as the splendid high-priest, of our age of prose and reason, of our excellent and indispensable eighteenth century.' 'Pope's ethics of good sense,' 'Addison's humane style,' 'the attainment of a fit prose'—these are the topics of the remainder of this chapter.

Alexander Pope, 1688-1744.

Pope's life may be passed over, except for a few disconnected facts. His father was a tradesman who made a comfortable fortune; hence the poet was never in straitened circumstances, and his 'Homer' secured him ample means of his own. The family were Roman Catholics, and Pope remained in that faith through life. He was always weak and sickly in body, bald and deformed, and almost a dwarf. He was an affectionate son and a faithful friend. In politics and in the Scriblerus Club he associated with the Tories, though professing himself neutral. These facts have all some bearing on his work. In the 'Epistle to Arbuthnot' he himself says:

'Why did I write? what sin to me unknown
Dipt me in ink, my parents', or my own?
As yet a child, nor yet a fool to fame,

I lisp'd in numbers, for the numbers came.
I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke, no father disobey'd.
The muse but serv'd to ease some friend, not wife,
To help me through this long disease, my life.'

Pope's literary life, like Milton's and Dryden's, falls naturally into three periods: the first may be called the period of tentatives; the second that of the translation of Homer; the third that of original translation and satire.

His works. His chief works, in chronological order, are the 'Pastorals' and 'Windsor Forest,' which describe nature in terms of art and town life, deck her out like a milliner's shop, and are admirable illustrations of how not to write pastoral poetry; the 'Essay on Criticism' (1711), which summed up Pope's poetical creed and that of his contemporaries; the 'Rape of the Lock' (1714), which Addison pronounced to be *merum sal*, and which has been called 'the real epos of society under Queen Anne, though designed as a burlesque'; the 'Messiah,' which formed number 378 of the 'Spectator'; 'Translation of Homer' (1715-1725); 'Epistle from Eloisa to Abelard'; 'Edition of Shakespeare'; the 'Dunciad'; 'Moral Essays'; 'Essay on Man'; 'Satires and Epistles.' The third period begins with the 'Dunciad' and comprises nearly all the poet's best work, produced between the years 1728 and 1738 inclusive. His fame among his contemporaries and throughout the eighteenth century by no means rested only on the later poems; but with us it is possible that his reputation would be higher if we possessed them and the 'Rape' alone. It is not that his powers of versification are seen to much better advantage in the 'Essay on Man' than in the 'Essay on Criticism'; the eternal snip-snap of his serried couplets can be heard and appreciated, and then anathematised, almost as well in the one as in the other; but in his last period, in the homœopathic doses of superficial philosophy in the 'Essay on Man,' still more in the 'Moral Essays,' and most of all in the 'Satires and Epistles,' Pope had hit upon the kind of writing in which his genius found its most natural and most perfect expression.

We propose now to illustrate, by quotation and brief comment, the chief defects and merits of Pope's poetry and by implication of that of his school.

The 'Essay on Criticism.'

The 'Essay on Criticism' was highly commended by Addison, and the following famous passage, in which Pope 'exemplified several of his precepts in the very precepts themselves,' especially took 'Mr. Spectator's' fancy.

'But most by numbers judge a poet's song,
And smooth or rough, with them, is right or wrong:
In the bright Muse, though thousand charms conspire,
Her voice is all these tuneful fools admire;
Who haunt Parnassus but to please their ear,
Not mend their minds; as some to church repair,
Not for the doctrine, but the music there.
These equal syllables alone require,
Though oft the ear the open vowels tire;
While expletives their feeble aid do join,
And ten low words oft creep in one dull line;
While they ring round the same unvaried chimes,
With sure returns of still expected rhymes,
Where'er you find "the cooling western breeze,"
In the next line it "whispers through the trees":
If crystal streams "with pleasing murmurs creep,"
The reader's threatened (not in vain) with "sleep":
Then at the last and only couplet fraught
With some unmeaning thing they call a thought,
A needless Alexandrine ends the song,
That, like a wounded snake, drags its slow length along'

The translation of Homer.

Nothing of Pope's shows so completely and finally the *difference* between the *tastes* of his day and ours in poetry as his translation of Homer. 'It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but you must not call it Homer,' Bentley is reported to have said. With us it is not merely that it is not Homer, although the contrast with the original doubtless accentuates all its defects; but it is also the grand storehouse of all the abominations of the Classic 'poetic diction.' How this diction enslaved eighteenth century poetry is seen in the way Johnson wrote of the 'Homer' sixty years after it appeared. 'Pope has left in his Homer a treasure of poetical elegances to posterity. His version tuned the English tongue; for since its appearance no writer, however deficient in other

powers, has wanted melody. Such a series of lines, so elaborately corrected and so sweetly modulated, took possession of the public ear. . . . . New sentiments and new images others may produce; but to attempt any further improvement of versification will be dangerous. Art and diligence have now done their best, and what shall be added will be the effort of tedious toil and needless curiosity.' We append a specimen of this final model of English versification, in which the conspicuous instances of 'poetic diction' are indicated by italics.

'The troops *exulting* sat in order round,
And *beaming* fires *illumined* all the ground.
As when the moon, *refulgent* lamp of night,
O'er heaven's pure *azure* spreads her *sacred* light,
When not a breath disturbs the deep *serene*,
And not a cloud o'ercasts the *solemn scene*,
Around her throne the *vivid* planets roll,
And stars unnumber'd *gild the glowing pole*,
O'er the dark trees a *yellower verdure* shed,
And *tip with silver* every mountain's head:
Then shine the vales, the rocks in *prospect* rise,
A flood of glory bursts from all the skies;
The *conscious swains*, rejoicing in the sight,
Eye the blue *vault*, and *bless the useful light*.'

This passage comes just at the close of Book VIII. of the 'Iliad'; the student should compare it with the original Greek, or with Lang, Leaf, and Myers' prose translation. In the 'Odyssey' Pope had the assistance of two scholars, Fenton and Broome, who translated and 'rimed up' twelve of the twenty-four books. But Pope

'(his musical finesse was such,
So nice his ear, so delicate his touch)
Made poetry a mere mechanic art,
And every warbler has his tune by heart.'

And these two warblers imitated his tune so successfully that it is not possible to distinguish Pope's work from theirs.

The 'Essay on Man.'

In didactic poetry, the 'Essay on Man' is his best production. It is addressed to Bolingbroke, and Pope clearly implies that in some measure —in what measure is disputed—he was its inspirer:

'Come then, my friend, my genius, come along;
Oh master of the poet, and the song! . . .
Shall then this verse to future age pretend
Thou wert my guide, philosopher, and friend?
That, urg'd by thee, I turn'd the tuneful art
From sounds to things, from fancy to the heart.'

Even Dr. Johnson, keen and appreciative critic of Pope and enthusiastic admirer of his poetry, can say little in praise of the 'Essay'; we cannot do better than quote part of his criticism as at once sound, just, and discriminating.

Johnson's criticism.

'The subject is perhaps not very proper for poetry; and the poet was not sufficiently master of his subject; metaphysical morality was to him a new study; he was proud of his acquisitions, and, supposing himself master of great secrets, was in haste to teach what he had not learned. Thus he tells us, in the first Epistle, that from the nature of the Supreme Being may be deduced an order of beings such as mankind, because infinite Excellence can do only what is best. He finds out that these beings must be "somewhere"; and that "all the question is, whether man be in a wrong place." Surely if, according to the poet's Leibnitzian reasoning, we may infer that man ought to be, only because he is, we may allow that his place is the right place, because he has it. Supreme Wisdom is not less infallible in disposing than in creating. But what is meant by *somewhere*, and *place*, and *wrong place*, it had been vain to ask Pope, who probably had never asked himself. Having exalted himself into the chair of wisdom, he tells us much that every man knows, and much that he does not know himself; that we see but little, and that the order of the universe is beyond our comprehension; an opinion not very uncommon; and that there is a chain of subordinate beings "from infinite to nothing," of which himself and his readers are equally ignorant. But he gives us one comfort, which without his help he supposes unattainable, in the position "that though we are fools, yet God is wise." This Essay affords an egregicus instance of the predominance of genius, the dazzling splendour of imagery, and the seductive powers of

eloquence. Never was penury of knowledge and vulgarity of sentiment so happily disguised. The reader feels his mind full, though he learns nothing; and, when he meets it in its new array, no longer knows the talk of his mother and his nurse. When these wonder-working sounds sink into sense, and the doctrine of the Essay, disrobed of its ornaments, is left to the powers of its naked excellence, what shall we discover? That we are, in comparison with our Creator, very weak and ignorant; that we do not uphold the chain of existence; and that we could not make one another with more skill than we are made. . . . To these profound principles of natural knowledge are added some moral instructions equally new; that self-interest, well understood, will produce social concord; that men are mutual gainers by mutual benefits; that evil is sometimes balanced by good; that human advantages are unstable and fallacious, of uncertain duration and doubtful effect; that our true honour is, not to have a great part, but to act it well; that virtue only is our own; and that happiness is always in our power. Surely a man of no very comprehensive search may venture to say that he has heard all this before; but it was never till now recommended by such a blaze of embellishments, or such sweetness of melody. The vigorous contraction of some thoughts, the luxuriant amplification of others, the incidental illustrations, and sometimes the dignity, sometimes the softness of the verses, enchain philosophy, suspend criticism, and oppress judgment by overpowering pleasure.'

Our illustration of Pope's didactic manner is the opening of the second Epistle, after reading which, together with the other extracts in this chapter, no one will be surprised that he is the most frequently quoted English poet after Shakespeare.

'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of Mankind is Man.
Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
He hangs between, in doubt to act, or rest;
In doubt to deem himself a God, or Beast;

In doubt his Mind or Body to prefer;
Born but to die, and reas'ning but to err;
Alike in ignorance, his reason such,
Whether he thinks too little, or too much:
Chaos of Thought and Passion, all confus'd;
Still by himself abus'd, or disabus'd,
Created half to rise, and half to fall;
Great lord of all things, yet a prey to all;
Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd:
The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!
  Go, wond'rous creature! mount where Science guides,
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides:
Instruct the planets in what orbs to run,
Correct old Time, and regulate the sun,
Go, soar with Plato to th' empyreal sphere,
To the first good, first perfect, and first fair;
Or tread the mazy round his follow'rs trod,
And quitting sense call imitating God;
As Eastern priests in giddy circles run,
And turn their heads to imitate the Sun,
Go, teach Eternal Wisdom how to rule—
Then drop into thyself, and be a fool!'

Pope's satire.

Pope's satire is found in all its perfection in the 'Dunciad,' which is even nastier than it is witty, in the 'Moral Essays,' which are a curious blend of moralising and satire, and in what are now usually called the 'Satires and Epistles,' which contain the Epistle to Arbuthnot and the Imitations of Horace. 'It is no paradox to say that these "Imitations" are among the most original of his writings. So entirely do they breathe the spirit of the age and country in which they were written, that they can be read without reference to the Latin model.' Before commenting on Pope's satirical method and manner, it will be well to sample his writing in this kind by quoting his two most famous 'portraits,' (1) that of Addison, (2) that of Lord Hervey, both from the Epistle to Arbuthnot (A.).

'Peace to all such! but were there One whose fires
True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires;
Blest with each talent and each art to please,
And born to write, converse, and live with ease:
Should such a man, too fond to rule alone,
Bear, like the Turk, no brother near the throne,
View him with scornful, yet with jealous eyes,

And hate for arts that caused himself to rise;
Damn with faint praise, assent with civil leer,
And without sneering, teach the rest to sneer;
Willing to wound, and yet afraid to strike,
Just hint a fault and hesitate dislike;
Alike reserv'd to blame, or to commend,
A tim'rous foe, and a suspicious friend;
Dreading ev'n fools, by Flatterers besieg'd,
And so obliging, that he ne'er oblig'd,
Like Cato, give his little Senate laws,
And sit attentive to his own applause;
While Wits and Templars ev'ry sentence raise,
And wonder with a foolish face of praise:—
Who but must laugh, if such a man there be?
Who would not weep, if ATTICUS were he?'

'A lash like mine no honest man shall dread,
But all such babbling blockheads in his stead.
Let Sporus tremble—*A*. What? that thing of silk,
Sporus, that mere white curd of Ass's milk?
Satire or sense, alas! can Sporus feel?
Who breaks a butterfly upon a wheel?
P. Yet let me flap this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and stings;
Whose buzz the witty and the fair annoys,
Yet wit ne'er tastes, and beauty ne'er enjoys:
So well-bred spaniels civilly delight
In mumbling of the game they dare not bite.
Eternal smiles his emptiness betray,
As shallow streams run dimpling all the way:
Whether in florid impotence he speaks,
And, as the prompter breathes, the puppet squeaks;
Or at the ear of Eve, familiar Toad,
Half froth, half venom, spits himself abroad,
In puns, or politics, or tales, or lies,
Or spite, or smut, or rhymes, or blasphemies:
His wit, all see-saw between *that* and *this*,
Now high, now low, now master up, now miss,
And he himself one vile Antithesis.
Amphibious thing! that, acting either part,
The trifling head or the corrupted heart,
Fop at the toilet, flatt'rer at the board,
Now trips a Lady, and now struts a Lord.
Eve's tempter thus the Rabbins have exprest,
A Cherub's face, a reptile all the rest;
Beauty that shocks you, parts that none will trust;
Wit that can creep, and pride that licks the dust.'

The latter is the bitterest satirical portrait in the language,

the former probably the meanest. They are about the most famous satirical portraits in English literature, and are a fair example of the way in which Pope marred his satire by making it the vehicle of personal spleen. It is inevitable that in this respect he should be compared with Dryden, and the comparison is almost entirely in the latter's favour. Pope's characters are for the most part not types, but individuals; and thus their satire, after having wounded the person at whom it was aimed as by a stab in the dark, for ever after misses the mark; the features of the victim are so clearly limned that no second victim is ever likely to recognise himself. Dryden 'knocks his antagonist down, and there an end. Pope seems to have nursed his grudge, and then, watching his chance, to have squirted vitriol from behind a corner, rather glad than otherwise if it fell on the women of those he hated or envied. And if Dryden is never dastardly, as Pope often was, so also he never wrote anything so maliciously depreciatory as Pope's unprovoked attack on Addison.' Coleridge insists on the evolution of the characters as a criterion of their excellence: 'You will find this a good gauge or evidence of genius—whether it progresses and evolves, or only spins upon itself. Take Dryden's Achitophel and Zimri—Shaftesbury and Buckingham; every line adds to or modifies the character, which is, as it were, a-building up to the very last verse; whereas, in Pope's Timon etc., the first two or three couplets contain all the pith of the character, and the twenty or thirty lines that follow are so much evidence or proof of overt acts of jealousy or pride, or whatever it may be that is satirised.'

It may be said finally—it is hoped that it may have been seen incidentally—that, though Pope's sphere is a limited one, within that sphere he is a past-master, especially in versification and in condensed epigrammatic expression.

Jonathan Swift, 1667-1745.

Of the three chief prose authors of the time, Addison, Defoe and Swift, we take Swift first because he is our greatest prose satirist. He was secretary to Sir William Temple; took orders, and finally became Dean of St. Patrick's, but he had

hoped for an English bishopric and was a disappointed man. Worse than that, he suffered from a disease which one could wish had been insanity, but which has been identified as something different and apparently worse. These facts must be borne in mind in forming a judgment of Swift's literary work. In politics he was a Tory, and edited the 'Examiner' on their side. He was the lifelong friend of Pope. Swift's most important works are: 'A Tale of a Tub,' an allegorical defence of the Church of England as against Popery and Dissent, of which Swift himself said in later years, 'What a genius I had when I wrote that book!'; the 'Battle fought last Friday between the Ancient and the Modern Books in St. James's Library,' a contribution on the side of the ancients to the foolish controversy as to the comparative merits of ancient and modern literature, a contribution of which it has been well said:

> 'St. James's old authors, so famed on each shelf,
> Are vanquished by what he has written himself';

'Argument against Abolishing Christianity,' one of the finest samples of the author's irony; the 'Letters of M.B., Drapier' (*i.e.* draper), which led to the withdrawal of Wood's 'brass halfpence,' and made Swift the idol of the Irish nation; 'Gulliver's Travels' (1726); and the 'Modest Proposal for preventing the children of poor people in Ireland from becoming a burden to their Parents or Country,' another masterpiece of irony.

Swift has been called 'as good a Christian as a man can be who is also a pagan, a pessimist, and a hypochondriac'; it is an exquisitely ironical comment upon the character of the age that such a man should have been forced to masquerade as the champion of Christianity. But it is as the author of 'Gulliver's Travels,' as our greatest master of irony, and as the wielder of a simple prose style, that we have to do with Swift here. 'Gulliver's Travels into several remote Nations of the World' are comprised in four voyages. The first is to Lilliput, where the inhabitants are about six inches high and everything else is in the same proportion: here the satire is directed to the meanness,

'Gulliver's Travels.'

chicanery and conventionality of the morality of politicians and statesmen. The second is to Brobdingnag, whose inhabitants are sixty feet in height, and therefore bear much the same relation to Gulliver as he bore to the Lilliputians. But to the Brobdingnagians, who live a simple Utopian life, man is 'the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth'; and we are to deduce the conclusion that everything that is needful for man is obvious (in the most literal sense of the word). The third voyage is to Laputa, the flying island, inhabited by philosophers and men of science; to the subject continent, Balnibarbi, with its metropolis, Lagado; to Glubbdubdrib, the island of sorcerers, where Gulliver has interviews with the dead; to Luggnagg, where the Struldbrugs are cursed with immortality of body but not of intellect or affection; and to Japan. Here the satire is directed to the absurdities of scientific specialisation and one-sided philosophy. The last voyage is to the country of the Houyhnhnms, a race of reasoning horses served by degraded human brutes called Yahoos—an outrageously embittered satire on the human race.

Swift's genius.

One may rise from the perusal of Gulliver amused, repelled, or awe-struck, but not pleased, instructed, edified or ennobled. Swift's contemporaries feared him, and we almost fear his 'awful' genius, which has an element of the super-human or rather non-human. His genius is mainly destructive; and he does not simply destroy, but lacerates. Yet if we can confine our attention to the less offensive parts of his writings or regard them solely from the literary point of view, we cannot but admire the simplicity of the style, the consistency of his allegory, and the power of his satire. Swift reported that an Irish bishop said that 'Gulliver' 'was full of improbable lies, and for his part he hardly believed a word of it.' The supreme cleverness of the book does not lie in the grotesque hypotheses, but in the marvellous consistency and vivid realism with which their consequences are worked out. Swift may have owed something to the realism of 'Robinson Crusoe' (1719);

but to maintain such realistic truth in a narrative that might have been literal fact and in a fairy-tale allegory are vastly different achievements. 'When you have once thought of big men and little men,' said Johnson, 'it is easy to do the rest.' The retort is almost too obvious. Let Johnson try. There is another characteristic of Swift's writing to which attention should be directed: its simplicity—'that simplicity without which no human performance can arrive to any great perfection.' It is a style that has never yet yielded its secret, never been successfully parodied. It is not too correct in syntax; its most marked feature seems to be the invariable selection of the inevitable word (the bull is intentional) in a vocabulary at once classical and idiomatic. 'Proper words, in proper places, make the true definition of a style.' Since 'Gulliver' is so well known, our illustrations of Swift's irony and of his style are taken from the 'Argument against Abolishing Christianity' and from the 'Modest Proposal.'

'It is again objected, as a very absurd, ridiculous custom, that a set of men should be suffered, much less employed and hired, to bawl one day in seven against the lawfulness of those methods most in use, toward the pursuit of greatness, riches, and pleasure, which are the constant practice of all men alive on the other six. But this objection is, I think, a little unworthy of so refined an age as ours. Let us argue this matter calmly: I appeal to the breast of any polite freethinker, whether, in the pursuit of gratifying a predominant passion, he has not always felt a wonderful incitement, by reflecting it was a thing forbidden: and, therefore, we see, in order to cultivate this taste, the wisdom of the nation has taken special care, that the ladies should be furnished with prohibited silks, and the men with prohibited wine. And, indeed, it were to be wished that some other prohibitions were promoted, in order to improve the pleasures of the town, which, for want of such expedients, begin already, as I am told, to flag and grow languid, giving way daily to cruel inroads from the spleen.'

'I shall now, therefore, humbly propose my own thoughts, which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child, well-nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food, whether stewed,

roasted, baked, or boiled; and I make no doubt that it will equally serve in a fricassee or a ragout.

I do therefore humbly offer it to public consideration, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children already computed, twenty thousand may be reserved. . . . That the remaining hundred thousand may, at a year old, be offered in sale to persons of quality and fortune through the kingdom; always advising the mother . . . to render them plump and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends; and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable dish, and, seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in winter.

I have reckoned, upon a medium, that a child just born will weigh twelve pounds, and in a solar year, if tolerably nursed, will increase to twenty-eight pounds.

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very proper for landlords, who, as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children. . . .

I profess, in the sincerity of my heart, that I have not the least personal interest in endeavouring to promote this necessary work, having no other motive than the public good of my country, by advancing our trade, providing for infants, relieving the poor, and giving some pleasure to the rich. I have no children by which I can propose to get a single penny; the youngest being nine years old, and my wife past child-bearing.'

Daniel Defoe, 1661-1731.

Daniel Defoe, journalist, pamphleteer, novelist, is one of the most inscrutable characters in our literary history. Bunyan was not of the literary caste, but he is universally respected; Defoe was regarded as a pariah even by journalists and publishers. His 'Shortest way with the Dissenters' (1702), by compelling him to find securities for good behaviour for seven years, had put him in the power of the government; he undertook 'secret service'; he changed sides, like a mere hireling, with changes of government; he wrote at the same time for and against his principles, till he can have had no principles left. Yet he was a man of almost incredible activity and versatility, and became a real power in literature. The mere titles of his writings occupy twenty-nine pages in Lee's Life. It will be sufficient here to

notice his 'Review,' 'Robinson Crusoe' (1719), 'Memoirs of a Cavalier,' and the 'Journal of the Plague Year.' 'The Review,' which appeared with uninterrupted regularity from 1704 to 1713 although it was written entirely by Defoe himself, is a landmark in the history of English periodical literature, especially as a link between Dunton's 'Athenian Gazette' and the 'Tatler' and 'Spectator.' The object of the 'Athenian Gazette' (1690) was to answer questions put by the public on religion, casuistry, love, literature and manners. Defoe went a step further in adding to his paper for a time a 'Mercure Scandale: or, Advice from the Scandalous Club.' In these two productions we find a good deal more than the germ of the 'Tatler.'

Defoe and the novel.

But Defoe's chief importance for us lies in his place in the 'evolution' (if the word may be pardoned) of the modern novel, by which a more literary age has replaced the drama in its decay. When almost the entire credit for the creation or paternity of the novel has been variously assigned to Bunyan, Addison and Defoe, it has surely been forgotten that there were novels of a kind in the sixteenth, as well as in the seventeenth century. Bunyan undoubtedly showed that a narrative could be conceived and carried through with consistency and vigour, and interspersed with animated dialogue; his living characters were a yet more important contribution to the material of fiction. Defoe selected secular subjects, banished allegory, and imitated the historical so closely that his fictions were easily mistaken for narratives of fact. Lord Chatham is said to have taken the 'Memoirs of a Cavalier' for a real history; and Dr. Mead, one of the first physicians of his day, when commissioned by government to report on the best means for preventing the plague, referred to Defoe's 'Plague Year' as a genuine contemporary narrative, giving the exact reference in a foot-note. No great mistake was made in either case: fictions which could so completely impose on learned contemporaries after the lapse of so little time from the date of the events described, are more closely allied to fact than to fiction, and serve some of the best purposes of

history. They might be called 'narrative history'; similarly, 'Robinson Crusoe' might be called 'narrative biography.' But can any of these works, which may be taken as typical of Defoe's fictions, be ranked as 'novels'? If they can, then anything that can be called a plot (for the problem of the means of Crusoe's return to the world never attains to the dignity of a plot), any excitation of curiosity by means of the never-failing interest of love, any power of characterisation, any analysis of passion or motive, any real study of the workings of the human heart, are not essentials of the novel. If they are essentials of the novel, then Defoe's fictions are not novels. In the accepted modern sense of the word, Richardson's 'Pamela' is the first modern novel.

His style.

This being so, the question remains, how Defoe is of such importance in the history of literature; and the answer is, for realistic narrative told in a realistic style. 'Robinson Crusoe' anticipated 'Gulliver,' and, being imitable, had far greater influence. An early parodist, the author of the 'Life and strange surprising Adventures of Mr. D—— De F——, of London, Hosier,' says that every old woman bought it and left it as a legacy with the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' the 'Practice of Piety,' etc. The work itself was a legacy to all future novelists. Its peculiar power had been anticipated by Defoe in three minor works, and the secret of its success was discovered by a clever contemporary before it was written, when the editor of 'Read's Journal' said in 1718 that Defoe's hand in another journal was recognisable by the 'agreeableness of the style . . the little art he is truly a master of, of forging a story and imposing it on the world for truth.' It is the art of lying; but what a fine art consistent lying is! It is the highest art to conceal art: this was all the easier for Defoe because his art was largely lack of art. We miss the suppressions, the siftings, the embellishments of the artist, and an impression forms in our minds that 'this simple honest fellow is telling us a true story'; but in reality the very prolixity, negligence and repetitions, which give us this impression, are among the most important elements of his

art. The following passage is extracted from the 'Journal of the Plague Year':

'It is indeed to be observ'd, that the women were, in all this Calamity, the most rash, fearless, and desperate Creatures; and as there were vast Numbers that went about as Nurses, to tend those that were sick, they committed a great many petty Thieveries in the Houses where they were employed; and some of them were publickly whipt for it, when perhaps they ought rather to have been hanged for Examples, for Numbers of Houses were robbed on these Occasions, till at length the Parish Officers were sent to recommend Nurses to the Sick, and always took an Account who it was they sent, so as that they might call them to account, if the House had been abused where they were placed.

But these Robberies extended chiefly to Wearing-Cloths, Linen, and what Rings or Money they could come at, when the Person dyed who was under their Care, but not to a general Plunder of the Houses; and I could give an Account of one of these Nurses, who several Years after, being on her Death-bed, confest with the utmost Horror, the Robberies she had committed at the Time of her being a Nurse, and by which she had enriched herself to a great Degree: But as for murthers, I do not find that there was ever any Proof of the Facts, in the manner, as it has been reported, except as above.

They did tell me indeed of a Nurse in one place, that laid a wet Cloth upon the Face of a dying Patient, who she tended, and so put an End to his Life, who was just expiring before: And another that smother'd a young Woman she was looking to, when she was in a fainting fit, and would have come to herself: Some that kill'd them by giving them one Thing, some another, and some starved them by giving them nothing at all: But these Stories had two Marks of Suspicion that always attended them, which caused me always to slight them, and to look on them as mere Stories, that People continually frighted one another with. (1.) That wherever it was that we heard it, they always placed the Scene at the farther End of the Town, opposite, or most remote from where you were to hear it. If you heard it in White-Chapel, it had happened at St. Giles's, or at Westminster, or Holborn, or that End of the Town; if you heard of it at that End of the Town, then it was done in White-Chapel, or the Minories, or about Cripplegate Parish: If you heard of it in the City, why, then it had happened in Southwark; and if you heard of it in Southwark, then it was done in the City, and the like.

In the next place, of what Part soever you heard the Story, the Particulars were always the same, especially that of laying a wet double Clout on a dying Man's Face, and that of smothering a young Gentlewoman, so that it was apparent, at least to my Judgment, that there was more of Tale than of Truth in those Things'

Joseph Addison, 1672-1719.

'Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison.' Johnson was right, even though no critic would now venture to repeat the advice; for Addison inherited the prose tradition of Dryden, and was, all in all, the best model the eighteenth century could have taken for its prose. There is no need here to touch on his life or even to mention his less known works; for us Addison is the 'Spectator.'

'The Spectator'

Steele started the 'Tatler' in 1709, when Addison was in Ireland; but the latter became a contributor, and considerably improved the prospects of the periodical, which was, however, discontinued at the beginnning of 1711. In the preface to the fourth bound volume Steele wrote: 'I fared like a distressed prince who calls in a powerful neighbour to his aid. I was undone by my auxiliary; when I had once called him in, I could not subsist without dependence on him.' Accordingly, on the 1st of March, 1711, appeared the first number of Steele and Addison's joint paper, 'The Spectator,' which appeared daily until 6th December, 1712. It excluded politics; substituted the periodical essay for the newspaper; cultivated humour and literary criticism. 'The new entertainment,' says Courthope, 'was provided by the original design of an imaginary club, consisting of several ideal types of character grouped round the central figure of the Spectator. They represent considerable classes or sections of the community, and are, as a rule, men of strongly marked opinions, prejudices, and foibles, which furnish inexhaustible matter of comment to the Spectator himself, who delivers the judgments of reason and common-sense. Sir Roger de Coverley, with his simplicity, his high sense of honour, and his old-world reminiscences,

reflects the country gentleman of the best kind; Sir Andrew Freeport expresses the opinions of the enterprising, hard-headed, and rather hard-hearted moneyed interest; Captain Sentry speaks for the army; the Templar for the world of taste and learning; the clergyman for theology and philosophy; while Will Honeycomb, the elderly man of fashion, gives the Spectator many opportunities for criticising the traditions of morality and breeding surviving from the days of the Restoration.' The new periodical was an immediate and immense success, and the question has often been asked, to which of the collaborators that success was mainly due. Steele's contributions number about forty less than Addison's. 'Steele was its projector, founder, editor,' says Henry Morley, 'and he was writer of that part of it which took the widest grasp upon the hearts of men.' It would be difficult to prove that statement. The eighteenth century critics, the general consensus of opinion, the test of popularity, would all reverse such a decision. Johnson observed that, of the half not written by Addison, not half was good.

Appreciation.

A question of much greater moment is the influence of the 'Spectator.' 'An instructor like Addison was now wanting, whose remarks, being superficial, might be easily understood, and, being just, might prepare the mind for more attainments.' This is the best reply to such remarks as that Addison is 'not deep'; that 'he thinks justly, but he thinks faintly'; that he is 'curious and observant, rather than penetrating.' If Addison had been a Berkeley, we might have had no Addison. His expressed intention (No. 10) was to enliven morality with wit, and to temper wit with morality. He was justified in boasting that he brought philosophy out of closets and libraries, schools and colleges, to dwell in clubs and assemblies, at tea-tables and coffee-houses. Both he and Steele addressed women, and laboured to establish the influence of woman in society. The most important papers bearing on literature were Addison's eighteen papers on 'Paradise Lost,' and three papers on ballads—alike noteworthy as calling attention to earlier masterpieces then unduly

neglected. Addison's humour was a new thing in our prose; he showed that English essays could have something of French lightness and grace, and that it was possible for reformed prose to charm; he introduced into prose the elegance and sprightliness of the best conversational idiom. 'His style,' writes Lytton, 'has the nameless urbanity in which we recognise the perfection of manner; courteous, but not courtier-like; so dignified, yet so kindly; so easy, yet so high-bred. It is the most perfect form of English.' To have written essays that were read by, and even fascinated, an ignorant or half-ignorant people, engrossed in politics, vitiated in taste, and corrupt in morals—essays that have never been surpassed as literature in writings of the same kind—is surely a stupendous, if not unparalleled, achievement.

Our selected extracts from the 'Spectator' are by Steele and Addison respectively.

'The first of our society is a gentleman of Worcestershire, of ancient descent, a baronet, his name Sir Roger de Coverley. His great-grandfather was inventor of that famous country dance which is called after him. All who know that shire are very well acquainted with the parts and merits of Sir Roger. He is a gentleman that is very singular in his behaviour, but his singularities proceed from his good sense, and are contradictions to the manners of the world, only as he thinks the world is in the wrong. However, this humour creates him no enemies, for he does nothing with sourness or obstinacy; and his being unconfined to modes and forms makes him but the readier and more capable to please and oblige all who know him. When he is in town, he lives in Soho Square. It is said, he keeps himself a bachelor by reason he was crossed in love by a perverse beautiful widow of the next county to him. Before this disappointment, Sir Roger was what you call a fine gentleman, had often supped with my Lord Rochester and Sir George Etherege, fought a duel upon his first coming to town, and kicked Bully Dawson in a public coffee-house, for calling him a youngster. But, being ill-used by the above-mentioned widow, he was very serious for a year and a half; and though, his temper being naturally jovial, he at last got over it, he grew careless of himself, and never dressed afterwards. He continues to wear a coat and doublet of the same cut that were in fashion at the time of his repulse, which, in his merry humours, he tells us, has been in and out twelve times since he

first wore it. He is now in his fifty-sixth year, cheerful, gay, and hearty; keeps a good house both in town and country; a great lover of mankind; but there is such a mirthful cast in his behaviour, that he is rather beloved than esteemed. His tenants grow rich, his servants look satisfied, all the young women profess to love him, and the young men are glad of his company; when he comes into a house, he calls the servants by their names, and talks all the way upstairs to a visit. I must not omit that Sir Roger is a justice of the *quorum*; that he fills the chair at a quarter session with great abilities, and three months ago gained universal applause by explaining a passage in the game act.'

'As I was yesterday morning walking with Sir Roger before his house, a country fellow brought him a huge fish, which, he told him, Mr. William Wimble had caught that very morning, and that he presented it with his service to him, and intended to come and dine with him. At the same time he delivered a letter, which my friend read to me as soon as the messenger left him.

"Sir Roger,—I desire you to accept of a Jack, which is the best I have caught this season. I intend to come and stay with you a week, and see how the Perch bite in the Black river. I observed with some concern, the last time I saw you upon the Bowling Green, that your whip wanted a lash to it; I will bring half-a-dozen with me I twisted last week, which I hope will serve you all the time you are in the country. I have not been out of the saddle for six days last past, having been at Eton with Sir John's eldest son. He takes to his learning hugely.

I am, Sir, your humble Servant,

Will. Wimble."

This extraordinary letter, and message that accompanied it, made me very curious to know the character and quality of the gentleman who sent them, which I found to be as follows. Will. Wimble is younger brother to a baronet, and descended of the ancient family of the Wimbles. He is now between forty and fifty; but being bred to no business, and born to no estate, he generally lives with his elder brother as superintendent of his game. He hunts a pack of dogs better than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding a hare. He is extremely well versed in all the little handicrafts of an idle man; he makes a May fly to a miracle, and furnishes the whole country with angle rods. As he is a good-natured, officious fellow, and very much esteemed upon account of his family, he is a welcome guest at

every house, and keeps up a good correspondence among all the gentlemen about him He carries a tulip root in his pocket from one to another, or exchanges a puppy between a couple of friends that live, perhaps, in the opposite sides of the country. Will. is a particular favorite of the young heirs, whom he frequently obliges with a net that he has weaved, or a setting dog that he has *made* himself, he now and then presents a pair of garters of his own knitting to their mothers or sisters, and raises a great deal of mirth among them by inquiring, as often as he meets them, "how they wear?" These gentlemanlike manufactures and obliging little humours make Will. the darling of the country.'

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AGE OF JOHNSON (1740-1798 A.D.).

The age of Johnson.

THE period between the dates at the head of this chapter is the age of Johnson in a different sense from that in which the last two ages have been named after Dryden and Pope respectively. The prolonged Classic period (1660-1798) has three very great names: Dryden placed himself at the head of the movement and led his forces to their first overwhelming victories; Pope succeeded him, and reigned without a rival over a stable empire; Johnson too reigned without a rival, but his throne was tottering to its fall, and during the whole of his reign rebellion was rife and he was often busily engaged in trying to stamp it out. He is by far the greatest man of letters in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and he fairly represents the dominant school in criticism; but in poetry he represents only the decaying tradition of Pope and not the reviving tradition of the Elizabethans, and therefore he does not represent the best poetry, much less the poetical aspirations, of his day. This was, above all things, an age of transition. Almost any earlier age might fairly be represented by one man; in this age we have to observe, not only how Johnson represented it, but also—perhaps the more important of the two—how he misrepresented it. For this purpose we shall first trace, in perspective, the movements and changes of the literature of the period, and then, taking the principal authors separately, show how each is related to the developments already traced.

The most marked features of the literature of this epoch were: the ascendancy of the Classic school of Pope in criticism, and its gradual undermining, decline and fall in poetry; the gradual, though somewhat fitful, return to Nature in poetry; the Romantic reaction slowly gathering power and momentum for the final overthrow of its hereditary foe; the birth and rapid perfection of the modern novel; the flourishing of prose literature generally; the supremacy of Johnson. The one great movement on which the student's eye must be fixed throughout the period is the Romantic reaction, that is to say, the return to the earlier ways of English poetry, to the principles and practice that were in vogue before the Restoration. It is rightly called a 'reaction'; because, although when the movement consummated in the early nineteenth century it developed several features quite distinct from those of Elizabethan literature, as long as it was only or mainly a rebellion against the Classic domination it was constantly harking back to Spenser, Milton and Shakespeare, and imitating them, often almost slavishly. If the reaction had produced a Wordsworth instead of a Collins or a Gray, the age of Johnson might have ended, and the second Romantic period have begun, a quarter of a century earlier than they did. The 'return to Nature' is a name often given to one mode or feature of the Romantic reaction, viz. the revival of the handling in poetry of subjects connected with external nature in a natural manner. The same expression may be used to include the movement, often associated with the name of Rousseau, for a return to more primitive and 'natural' ways of life and social customs, but that movement lies beyond our scope. The eighteenth century has been rightly called 'the age of prose.' It did not fashion modern prose style; that, as we have seen, was done by Dryden; but it took the instrument that had been shaped for it, and turned it to glorious uses. Moreover, it did something for its further development: it improved and perfected, in the works of Fielding, Johnson, Gibbon and others, the solid and masculine style of prose, as distinguished from the conversational, almost feminine style of

Its general features.

Addison on the one hand, and the highly ornate and rhetorical style of Burke on the other. A recent writer thus summarises the gains of the century. 'The eighteenth century by itself had created the novel and practically created the literary history; it had put the essay into general circulation; it had hit off various forms, and an abundant supply, of lighter verse; it had added largely to the literature of philosophy. Above all, it had shaped the form of English prose-of-all-work, the one thing that remained to be done at its opening. When an age has done so much, it seems somewhat illiberal to reproach it with not doing more.'

The Romantic reaction

Before passing to individual authors, it is expedient to follow, with as much fulness as space permits, the course of the Romantic reaction. Even while the fame of the Classic poetry was at its height, the way was being prepared for its overthrow. Before Pope had reached the summit of his fame in the fourth decade of the century, Thomson's 'Winter' (1726) and his complete 'Seasons' (1730) had appeared. Nature herself at first-hand, not mere conventional descriptions of her by poets who recommended her as a tonic to the town-weary, found a place once more in our literature, and was to find a larger one than at any earlier period. 'Excepting the "Nocturnal Reverie" of Lady Winchelsea,' says Wordsworth, 'and a passage or two in the "Windsor Forest" of Pope, the poetry of the period intervening between the publication of the "Paradise Lost" of Milton and the "Seasons" does not contain a single new image of external nature, and scarcely presents a familiar one from which it can be inferred that the eye of the poet had been steadily fixed upon the object, much less that his feelings had urged him to work upon it in the spirit of genuine imagination.'

James Thomson, 1700-1748.

The praise here given to Pope was not deserved; the implied praise to Thomson was fully earned. Thomson is one of the greatest of our minor poets; he is the forerunner, and in some measure the inspirer, of Cowper, Wordsworth and Tennyson in his observation of Nature and country life. It is as

easy to exaggerate what he did as to neglect him unduly. External nature in the eighteenth century, says Dowden, 'is not a living Presence with which the spirit of man communes: it is a collection of objects which may be described in detail, and which are subject to certain general laws. To Thomson a flower is an object which has a certain shape and colour; fair-handed Spring scatters them abroad—

"Violet darkly blue,
And polyanthus of unnumbered dyes;
The yellow wallflower stained with iron-brown,"

and as many others as the passage may require. When Thomson would be poetically devout, the Author of nature is discovered in the elegant art of manufacturing flowers:

"Soft roll your incense, herbs and fruits and flowers,
In mingled clouds to Him whose sun exalts,
Whose breath perfumes you and whose pencil paints."

We are taught to "look through nature up to nature's God." To Shelley a flower is a thing of light and of love, bright with its yearning, pale with its passion. To Wordsworth a flower is a living partaker of the common spiritual life and joy of being, a joy which is at once calm and ecstatic.' This is true enough, but Thomson's historical position must not be left out of account. It is not a reproach to him that he was not Wordsworth and the rest; it is a credit to him that he helped to make them possible. It is not a reproach, but a credit, to him that he is a describer in detail, an enumerator if you will. The fact remains that as a lover of Nature he took us back and introduced us once again to her. To Thomson then this, among other praises, must certainly be given: to him we must trace that love and careful observation of external nature which finds so large a place in our later poetry, and which forms one of the characteristic notes of the Romantic revival at the close of the century.

The Romantic reaction in the earlier part of the century.

Side by side with this return to Nature, we find other signs of revolt in both the form and the subject-matter of poetry. In form, poets, finding it impossible to surpass Pope in the handling of his chosen metre, the couplet, and knowing that some degree of novelty is necessary to

success in literature, reverted to older metres, blank verse, octosyllabic couplets (as in Milton's 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso'), and the Spenserian stanza, or to modifications of those metres. Thomson's 'Seasons' is in blank verse, and indeed a large amount of poetry in that measure was written by Young (in 'Night Thoughts') and others at the very time when Pope's fame was at its height. Collins and Gray carried on the revolt, both in the use of less regular measures, and in seeking sources of inspiration and subjects for their verse widely removed from the prevailing themes of the life of the town and of society. Collins brought back a lyric spirit that had long been absent from English poetry. Gray, says Professor Hales, 'has for the student of literature a very particular interest as having in many ways anticipated the tastes and the devotions of a subsequent age. . . . He was a keen and eager Greek scholar. . . . His attachment to older English literature was another of his special distinctions. . . . He felt the beauty of the English lakes a generation before the great hierophant of them settled at Dove Cottage, Grasmere.' And when we read his 'Elegy,' that 'poem of such high perfection and such universal appeal to the tenderest and the noblest depth of human feeling,' we know that we have moved not so much to a great distance from Pope as into a province unknown to him. And the movement was by no means confined to the greater authors alone. In the middle third of the century, many men, whose poetry is not of intrinsic merit sufficient to warrant their inclusion here, were doing work of great historic importance in treating of new subjects, in trying to force poetry into new paths and to make it return to old ones. At the same time it must never be forgotten that they were for the most part 'a feeble folk.' If at one time they struck a Romantic vein, their next work was as likely as not purely Classic. Even in ostensibly Romantic poetry they tried to conciliate the 'powers that were' by moralising in Pope's manner. An individual named Boyse wrote 'The Olive; an Heroic Ode in the stanza of Spenser.' It is not in Spenser's stanza at all, but in a ten-lined imitation of his stanza made fashionable by the Classic poet Prior.

These facts are mentioned here as being typical of the age. Most curious and significant of all, however, is the fact that the considerable poet Shenstone published in 1737 a burlesque imitation of Spenser called 'The Schoolmistress,' which the public, being in the mood for Romantic experiments, elected to take as a serious poem. Shenstone therefore decided to fall in with their humour, and, aided no doubt by a vastly increased respect for his original, republished the work in 1742 as a real imitation of the master, and so successful a one that the great majority of readers to the present day never suspect the burlesque intention.

The Romantic reaction in the latter part of the century.

By about the middle of the century the revolt against the Classic school had become definite and conscious. Joseph Warton, in his 'Essay on Pope' (1756), ventured to express this awful heresy: 'it is manifest that good sense and judgment were Pope's characteristical excellences rather than fancy and invention.' Two or three occurrences after the middle of the century may serve to mark clearly the progress of the movement. It will be observed again and again that among the distinctive marks of the Romantic school are the striving against convention, the love of novelty, the preference for the remote and the mysterious. The growing appreciation of work inspired by such motives as these is seen in the reception accorded to the 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry Collected in the Highlands of Scotland,' and translated by Macpherson, together with other supposed works of the Celtic poet Ossian, into rhapsodical English prose. Into the question of the genuineness of these productions it is not possible to enter here. But the fact that they were received with enthusiasm and exercised considerable influence both here and on the Continent, is a plain indication that the yoke of the 'correct' school was being thrown off. A few years later a youth of genius, out of harmony with the traditions of the dominant school, conceived the unfortunate idea of passing off his poems as the genuine work of a fifteenth century English poet; Chatterton's deceptions were soon discovered, but they have more interest than is connected with the miserable life and tragic death of their author. From Chatterton

(1752-1770) the commencement of the new Romantic poetry is sometimes dated; his writings in form and spirit belong entirely to the new age, not only having as little in common with the eighteenth as they have with the fifteenth century, but exercising a marked influence on his successors, notably on Coleridge.

Three works of research also mark strikingly the tendency of the time to look back lovingly to the earlier English poetry. While Chatterton was sending his forgeries to Horace Walpole, and Walpole was affording proof of the zeal and ignorance of the craving after the medieval by successfully palming off his own 'Castle of Otranto' (1764) as a 'Gothic' romance, Percy was preparing his 'Reliques of Ancient English Poetry' (1765). Percy's 'Reliques' consisted of forty-five old ballads taken from his Folio MS., interlarded with a somewhat miscellaneous collection of more modern, chiefly lyrical, pieces, introduced in order to make the really precious old ballads more palatable to the vitiated taste of the eighteenth century. Percy wrote an apologetic preface to conciliate the public, as was then customary, though he recognised the power and beauty of the old poetry. 'The publication of the "Reliques,"' writes Professor Hales, 'constitutes an epoch in the history of the great revival of taste; it changed the face of literature. After 1765, before the end of the century, numerous collections of old ballads were made. The taste that was awakened never slumbered again. The recognition of our old life and poetry that the "Reliques" gave was at last gloriously confirmed and established by Walter Scott.' Wordsworth testified in 1815: 'I do not think that there is an able writer in verse of the present day who would not be proud to acknowledge his obligations to the "Reliques."' Nine years later (1774) appeared the first volume of Warton's 'History of English Poetry.' Thomas Warton was for ten years professor of poetry at Oxford, and his 'History' has not long been superseded by that of a late holder of his chair. Whatever its defects may be, it shows a very genuine love of our older literature and a very close acquaintance with it. The fact that it does not

Three influential works.

come down as far as the poet Cowley, with whom Johnson's 'Lives of the Poets' begins, sets off the contrast between the Romantic and the Classic outlook over the past of English literature. Thomas Warton has another title to fame in that he brought back the sonnet into some measure of favour: only two sonnets have come down to us composed between Milton's and Warton's, one of the two being by Gray. Thomas and his elder brother Joseph must be remembered as the men who, more than any others, helped to turn the Romantic reaction into a revolt and a rebellion against the 'tyranny of Pope.' Lastly, in 1775-1778, appeared Tyrwhitt's edition of the 'Canterbury Tales,' a work of great critical value, which has probably done more for accurate and scholarly study of Chaucer than any single work before or since. The modernizations of Dryden and Pope had done more harm than good in that direction.

While, during the years between the death of Pope and 1780, the Wartons, Collins, Gray and Chatterton were quietly undermining the strongholds of the 'correct' school, without the will, the strength, or without originality enough to raze them to the ground, during the following twenty years the whole tottering fabric fell in mighty ruin, and new works of strange, and yet not altogether strange, beauty began to rise in its place. In the ninth decade of the century the following works appeared:—

1780-1790 A.D.

1781: Crabbe's 'Library.'
1782: Cowper's 'Table Talk.'
1783: Blake's 'Poetical Sketches,' Crabbe's 'Village,' Ritson's 'Collection of English Songs.'
1785: Cowper's 'Task' and 'John Gilpin.'
1786: Burns's 'Poems.'
1787: Blake's 'Songs of Innocence,' Burns's 'Songs' (in the Scots Musical Museum).
1789: Bowles's 'Sonnets,' White's 'Natural History of Selborne.'
1790: Ritson's 'Ancient Songs.'

Here 'eighteenth century poetry' can be seen in its death-agony. A mere examination of the titles of the above

works shows what tremendous changes were going on underneath. The decade opens with the 'Library' and 'Table Talk'; it closes with the 'Sonnets' which inspired Coleridge, the 'Natural History of Selborne' and 'Ancient Songs' In Crabbe and Cowper the old order is ceasing, giving place to the new order in Cowper, Blake and Burns. Crabbe was writing on in the old faded style; in the 'Library' he is indeed a 'Pope in worsted stockings,' Pope without Pope's wit or 'musical finesse.' Even the 'Village' is quite devoid of any trace of the new naturalism; he is as severe in his aversion from romance as Don Quixote himself. Cowper cast the slough of the old style triumphantly; Blake and Burns had no touch of it, no frost upon the soul. Instead of the wooden things before produced there came a rush of pure lyrical poetry, almost as if there had been no eighteenth century and the Caroline lyrists were still writing; nothing had been heard in England like the songs of these two men since young Milton doffed his singing robes.

Preparing for Wordsworth

Before we pass in review the principal writers of the period surveyed in this chapter, let us briefly note the advance that had been made in preparation for Wordsworth by 1790. In the poetry of Cowper, Blake and Burns, pure natural feeling, wholly free from artifice, had returned to English song, and had found expression in natural language. This was one sign of a revolt against conventionality that was beginning to show itself in all departments: in form, in matter, in society, in life. Other symptoms of this revolt in contemporary poetry were: a study of social questions, and new interest taken in the poor; indications of the democratic spirit not being confined to the other side of the Channel; a truer delineation of human character; a widening of the human sympathies to include children and animals, and the joys and sorrows of home. One at least of these features is mirrored in a simple little lyric of Blake's:

'Little lamb, who made thee?
Dost thou know who made thee?
Gave thee life and bade thee feed
By the stream and o'er the mead;

Gave thee clothing of delight,
Softest clothing, woolly, bright;
Gave thee such a tender voice,
Making all the vales rejoice?
  Little lamb, who made thee?
  Dost thou know who made thee?

Little lamb, I'll tell thee;
Little lamb, I'll tell thee.
He is called by thy name,
For he calls himself a lamb;
He is meek and He is mild,
He became a little child.
I a child and thou a lamb,
We are called by his name.
  Little lamb, God bless thee!
  Little lamb, God bless thee!'

The novelists

It will be remembered that Richardson, and not Defoe, has already been proclaimed 'the father of the modern novel,' that is, of the 'story wrought round the passion of love to a tragic or joyous conclusion.' Of all the unlikely persons to have attained to this honour Samuel Richardson might have been thought the unlikeliest. He was the son of a very poor father, was apprenticed to a London printer, set up in business for himself, prospered, and became Master of the Stationers' Company. He is the 'beau idéal' of an aldermanic Lord Mayor kind of man, and who could conceive of a Lord Mayor lowering himself to write a novel? Moreover, Richardson was at an age when he might have been expected to know better—fifty-one in the year of the publication of his first work. Lastly, his character was as inimical as his circumstances to the rôle of novelist. He was an affable corpulent person, given to the awful dissipation of drinking tea in the society of adoring females. On the other hand it must be mentioned that Richardson had always been a profuse letter-writer, and in early days in his village home he carried on the amorous correspondence of three young ladies at once. His three novels are cast entirely in the form of letters. About 1739 he was asked to compose a volume of 'Familiar

Richardson, 1689-1761.

Letters' for the book-trade, and out of this commission arose his first novel 'Pamela,' the story of a virtuous servant who turned her young master from a rake into a husband. In 1748 appeared his masterpiece, 'Clarissa,' a sort of companion story of a lady seduced by a gentlemanly villain. 'Pamela' was intended to be a picture of rewarded virtue; but it is vulgar, and the conclusion is tame in the extreme. On the other hand, 'Clarissa' is ostensibly a picture of unhappy virtue; but it is in reality far more moral than its predecessor, and its conclusion is one of the most unbearably pathetic scenes in all fiction. 'As the successive volumes appeared, and readers were held in suspense as to the fate of the exquisite heroine, Richardson was deluged with letters entreating him to have mercy. The women of England knelt sobbing round his knees, and addressed him as though he possessed the power of life and death.'

Richardson no doubt owes something to Defoe; but he was strongest where Defoe was weakest; he had the insight into character, the power of analysing and depicting it, that Defoe lacked. Defoe saw things; Richardson described people's thoughts and feelings as accurately as if he could see them; he is one of the acutest students of the human heart that ever lived. He was an artist of character, an analyser of human motives and emotions, with no rivals before him and few since. 'Clarissa' produced an impression in France such as no English work had ever made before. 'Diderot said that it placed Richardson with Homer and Euripides, Rousseau openly imitated it, and Alfred de Musset has styled it the best novel in the world.' It is impossible to do Richardson justice in a short extract, because his effects are produced with great deliberation and his art is long drawn out. Our specimen is from a letter to the villain Lovelace, from his friend Belford, describing Clarissa's death.

'Then turning her head towards me—Do you, sir, tell your friend that I forgive him! And I pray to God to forgive him! Again pausing, and lifting up her eyes, as if praying that he would. Let him know how happily I die:—and that, such as my own, I wish to

be his last hour. She was again silent a few moments: and then resuming—My sight fails me!—Your voices only—(for we both applauded her Christian, her divine frame, though in accents as broken as her own) and the voice of grief is alike in all. Is not this Mr. Morden's hand? pressing one of his with that he had just let go—Which is Mr Belford's? holding out the other. I gave her mine. God Almighty bless you both, she said, and make you both—in your last hour—for you must come to this—happy as I am.

She paused again, her breath growing shorter; and after a few minutes—And now, my dearest cousin, give me your hand—nearer—still nearer—drawing it towards her, and she pressed it with her dying lips—God protect you, dear, dear sir, and once more receive my best and most grateful thanks—and tell my dear Miss Howe, and vouchsafe to see and to tell my worthy Norton—she will be one day, I fear not, though now lowly in her fortunes, a saint in heaven—tell them both that I remember them with thankful blessings in my last moments! And pray God to give them happiness here for many, many years for the sake of their friends and lovers; and a heavenly crown hereafter; and such assurances of it as I have, through the all-satisfying merits of our blessed Redeemer.

Her sweet voice and broken periods methinks still fill my ears, and never will be out of my memory. After a short silence, in a more broken and faint accent—And you, Mr. Belford, pressing my hand, may God preserve you, and make you sensible of all your errors—you see, in me, how all ends—may you be—and down sank her head upon her pillow, she fainting away and drawing from us her hands. We thought she was then gone; and each gave way to a violent burst of grief. But soon showing signs of returning life, our attention was again engaged; and I besought her, when a little recovered, to complete in my favour her half-pronounced blessing. She waved her hand to us both, and bowed her head six times, as we have since recollected, as if distinguishing every person present; not forgetting the nurse and maidservant; the latter having approached the bed, weeping as if crowding in for the divine lady's last blessing; and she spake faltering and inwardly— Bless—bless—bless—you all—and—now—and now—(holding up her almost lifeless hands for the last time) come—O come—Blessed Lord JESUS! And with these words, the last but half-pronounced, expired:—such a smile, such a charming serenity overspreading her sweet face at the instant, as seemed to manifest her eternal happiness already begun. O Lovelace!—But I can write no more.'

Fielding took the novel from Richardson's hands and well nigh perfected it. He gave to it what it was not likely to acquire in a series of letters—complexity of incident, variety of characterisation, and masterly construction, besides the humour that both Defoe and Richardson lacked. 'Joseph Andrews' (1742), brother to the highly virtuous servant 'Pamela,' was designed as a burlesque; but after a few chapters Fielding became interested in his work, seemed to forget that he was writing a skit, and produced a pure comedy in fiction. Among many other works, 'The History of Tom Jones,' his masterpiece, followed in 1749, when the author's health was already giving way. The highest praise is due to Fielding's plots, that of 'Tom Jones' being one of the best ever put into a novel. There is one episode of undue length; but there are no unnatural incidents; the movement of the story is like the growth of a tree. It is low life, but the character-painting is almost unequalled, and after all the mirror is held up to nature.

Henry Fielding, 1707-1754.

'He looked on naked nature unashamed,
And saw the Sphinx, now bestial, now divine,
In change and rechange; he nor praised nor blamed,
But drew her as he saw with fearless line.
Did he good service? God must judge, not we.
Manly he was, and generous and sincere;
English in all, in genius blithely free:
Who loves a man may see his image here.'

Fielding has been often compared with Richardson. Against the portly Master of the Stationers' Company we have to set the scholar and the magistrate; the manliest of men against an old woman. 'There is a cheerful, sunshiny, breezy spirit that prevails everywhere,' writes Coleridge, 'strongly contrasted with the close hot day-dreamy continuity of Richardson.' And again: 'What a master of composition Fielding was! Upon my word, I think the "Oedipus Tyrannus," "The Alchemist," and "Tom Jones," the three most perfect plots ever planned. And how charming, how wholesome, Fielding always is! To take him up after Richardson is like emerging from a sick-room heated by stoves into an open lawn on a breezy

day in May.' It would be equally true to say that it is like the change from high tea in the company of respectable spinsters to a country wake.

Fielding's style is manly, plain, and lucid; but for grace and elegance we have to wait for his successors, Sterne and Goldsmith. It is again difficult to do him justice in a short extract; but the following piece from 'Tom Jones' will serve as well as any.

'Our critic was now pretty silent till the play, which Hamlet introduces before the king. This he did not at first understand, till Jones explained it to him; but he no sooner entered into the spirit of it, than he began to bless himself that he had never committed murder. Then turning to Mrs. Miller, he asked her if she did not imagine the king looked as if he was touched; "though he is," said he, "a good actor, and doth all he can to hide it. Well, I would not have so much to answer for, as that wicked man there hath, to sit upon a much higher chair than he sits upon. No wonder he run away; for your sake I'll never trust an innocent face again."

The grave-digging scene next engaged the attention of Partridge, who expressed much surprise at the number of skulls thrown upon the stage. To which Jones answered, "That it was one of the most famous burial places about town." "No wonder, then," cries Partridge, "that the place is haunted. But I never saw in my life a worse grave-digger. I had a sexton, when I was clerk, that should have dug three graves while he is digging one. The fellow handles a spade as if it were the first time he had ever had one in his hand. Ay, ay, you may sing. You had rather sing than work, I believe." Upon Hamlet's taking up the skull, he cried out, "Well! it is strange to see how fearless some men are: I never could bring myself to touch anything belonging to a dead man, on any account. He seemed frightened enough too at the ghost I thought. *Nemo omnibus horis sapit.*"

Little more worth remembering occurred during the play, at the end of which Jones asked him, which of the players he had liked best? To this he answered with some appearance of indignation at the question, "The king, without doubt." "Indeed, Mr. Partridge," says Mrs. Miller, "you are not of the same opinion with the town; for they are all agreed, that Hamlet is acted by the best player who ever was on the stage." "He the best player!" cries Partridge, with a contemptuous sneer, "why I could act as well as he myself.

I am sure, if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner, and done just as he did. And then, to be sure, in that scene, as you call it, between him and his mother, where you told me he acted so fine, why, Lord help me, any man, that is any good man, that has such a mother, would have done exactly the same. I know you are only joking with me; but, indeed, Madam, though I was never at a play in London, yet I have seen acting before in the country; and the king for my money; he speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other. Anybody may see he is an actor."'

With Collins and Gray we return for the time to poetry. William Collins alone disputes with Gray the poetical supremacy of the mid-eighteenth century. To the literary historian he is the more important figure of the two. He did not fetch inspiration from sources so remote as Gray; but on the other hand he was less chilled by the Classic influence of the hour; he produced in his few sane years of manhood about as much as Gray did in a lifetime; and there is in his verse, as will be seen, a note of pure song that Gray never reached. Collins was, in some sort, an eighteenth century Shelley. 'He had employed his mind,' writes Johnson, 'chiefly on works of fiction and subjects of fancy; and, by indulging some peculiar habits of thought, was eminently delighted with those flights of imagination which pass the bounds of nature, and to which the mind is reconciled only by a passive acquiescence in popular traditions. He loved fairies, genii, giants, and monsters; he delighted to rove through the meanders of enchantment, to gaze on the magnificence of golden palaces, to repose by the waterfalls of Elysian gardens.' Collins was attacked by brain disease about 1753, and died at Chichester at the age of thirty-eight.

Collins, 1721-1759.

'He affected the obsolete when it was not worthy of revival,' says Johnson, who could never resist a stab at the Romantic reactionaries, even when the poet criticised had been a dear personal friend. Collins 'affected' nothing; he remained for long so obscure and unpopular that he effected little too. 'The whole Romantic School, in its germ no doubt, but yet unmistakably foreshadowed, lies already in the "Ode on the Superstitions of the Highlands."'

Undoubtedly this ode is distinctly Romantic in subject, treatment, and style and moreover it struck an entirely new note in English verse—not a mere echo of the Elizabethans. Yet its outward influence on the movement must have been inappreciable, for it was lost sight of and never published until 1788. We have said that there was no affectation in Collins's poetry; he was just a Romantic born out of due season; he despaired of the return of the days of Milton, of whose poetry there are some echoes in his own. In the 'Ode on the Poetical Character,' he represents himself leaving Waller and following Milton 'in vain':

'Thither oft, his glory greeting,
From Waller's myrtle shades retreating,
With many a vow from hope's aspiring tongue,
My trembling feet his guiding steps pursue,
In vain—such bliss to one alone,
Of all the sons of soul, was known,
And heaven, and fancy, kindred powers,
Have now o'erturned the inspiring bowers;
Or curtained close such scene from every future view.'

We have already seen how needless was his despair. It has been well said that of all our minor poets Collins is probably the one who has shown most of the higher qualities of poetry. His appeal is not always sure of an immediate response: he may be 'difficult'; but the difficulty is well worth overcoming. The following 'Ode to Evening' is sure to be better appreciated at the twentieth reading than at the first; the rich economy of expression, by which a single phrase or epithet suggests a whole picture to the mind, requires time to produce its full effect.

'If aught of oaten stop, or pastoral song,
May hope, chaste eve, to soothe thy modest ear,
Like thy own solemn springs,
Thy springs, and dying gales,

O nymph reserved, while now the bright-haired sun
Sits in yon western tent, whose cloudy skirts,
With brede ethereal wove,
O'erhang his wavy bed:

Now air is hushed, save where the weak-eyed bat
With short, shrill shriek, flits by on leathern wing;
Or where the beetle winds
His small but sullen horn,

As oft he rises 'midst the twilight path,
Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum:
Now teach me, maid composed,
To breathe some softened strain,

Whose numbers, stealing through thy darkening vale,
May, not unseemly, with its stillness suit,
As, musing slow, I hail
Thy genial loved return!

For when thy folding star arising shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp
The fragrant hours, and elves
Who slept in flowers the day,

And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge,
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
The pensive pleasures sweet
Prepare thy shadowy car.

Then lead, calm votaress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile,
Or upland fallows grey
Reflect its last cool gleam.

But when chill blustering winds, or driving rain,
Forbid my willing feet, be mine the hut,
That from the mountain's side
Views wilds, and swelling floods,

And hamlets brown, and dim-discovered spires;
And hears their simple bell, and marks o'er all
Thy dewy fingers draw
The gradual dusky veil.

While spring shall pour his showers, as oft he wont,
And bathe thy breathing tresses, meekest eve!
While summer loves to sport
Beneath thy lingering light;

While sallow autumn fills thy lap with leaves;
Or winter, yelling through the troublous air,
Affrights thy shrinking train,
And rudely rends thy robes;

So long, sure-found beneath the sylvan shed,
Shall fancy, friendship, science, rose-lipped health,
Thy gentlest influence own,
And hymn thy favourite name!'

This ode is the unique instance in English literature of a perfectly successful lyric without rime.

Thomas Gray, 1716-1771

The step from Collins to Gray is an easy one. They were contemporaries; they were both scholars; they both contributed to the Romantic reaction. Apart from the 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard,' the chief productions of the two men were odes. Dickens says somewhere that no poet ever gained a place among the immortals with so small a volume under his arm as Gray; but he might have made an exception in favour of Collins, who has been somewhat unfairly overshadowed by the popularity of the author of the 'Elegy.' Each poet has his champions. Matthew Arnold says that 'Gray is our poetical classic of that literature and age.' On the other hand Swinburne holds that while, 'as an elegiac poet, Gray holds for all ages to come his unassailable and sovereign station; as a lyric poet, he is simply unworthy to sit at the feet of Collins. . . The Muse gave birth to Collins; she did but give suck to Gray.' Something like this is probably the general opinion among poets, whereas the *profanum vulgus* plumps for Gray. Let us be content, with Swinburne, to assign them the supremacy in their respective realms: Collins in the lyric, Gray in the elegy. The style that the latter 'always aimed at and (so he says) never could attain' was 'extreme conciseness of expression, yet pure, perspicuous and musical.' This indicates one of the defects of Gray's poetry: it was over-refined, and lacked spontaneity. There was one critic whom the poet could seldom please—himself. It was almost a case of 'Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus,' for Gray had the reputation of being the most learned man in Europe. His connection with the new movement in literature is not so intimate as that of Collins; he is colder and more of a mere antiquary; but his 'Fatal Sisters' and 'Descent of Odin,' two odes from the Norse, and the 'Triumphs of Owen' from the Welsh, were among the earliest poems in one department of the Romantic reaction. Almost every line of the 'Elegy written in a Country Churchyard' (that of Stoke Poges) is a 'household word'; but even

outside that, Gray has contributed a number of familiar quotations to the common stock, such as:

'And snatch a fearful joy';

'Gay hope is theirs by fancy fed,
Less pleasing when possest';

'Alas! regardless of their doom,
The little victims play;
No sense have they of ills to come,
Nor care beyond to-day';

'where ignorance is bliss,
'Tis folly to be wise'——

all from the 'Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College.' Our extract consists of the last strophe, antistrophe and epode of the Pindaric ode on the 'Progress of Poetry':

'Far from the sun and summer-gale,
In thy green lap was Nature's Darling laid,
What time, where lucid Avon stray'd,
To him the mighty mother did unveil
Her awful face: the dauntless child
Stretch'd forth his little arms and smiled.
"This pencil take (she said), whose colours clear
Richly paint the vernal year:
Thine too these golden keys, immortal Boy!
This can unlock the gates of joy!
Of horror that, and thrilling fears,
Or ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears."

Nor second He, that rode sublime
Upon the seraph-wings of Ecstasy,
The secrets of the abyss to spy.
He passed the flaming bounds of place and time:
The living throne, the sapphire blaze,
Where angels tremble while they gaze,
He saw; but, blasted with excess of light,
Closed his eyes in endless night.
Behold, where Dryden's less presumptuous car
Wide o'er the fields of glory bear
Two coursers of ethereal race,
With necks in thunder clothed, and long-resounding pace.

Hark, his hands the lyre explore!
Bright-eyed Fancy, hovering o'er,
Scatters from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe, and words that burn.

But ah! 'tis heard no more—
  Oh lyre divine, what daring spirit
  Wakes thee now? Tho' he inherit
Nor the pride, nor ample pinion,
  That the Theban eagle bear,
Sailing with supreme dominion
  Thro' the azure deeps of air;
Yet oft before his infant eyes would run
  Such forms as glitter in the Muse's ray,
With orient hues, unborrowed of the sun:
  Yet shall he mount, and keep his distant way
Beyond the limits of a vulgar fate,
Beneath the Good how far—but far above the Great'

Samuel Johnson, 1709-1784.

Whether or not Gray be 'the poetical classic' of that age, Dr. Johnson is its best representative; if he stands chiefly for a decaying literary tradition, he was on terms of personal friendship with several of the Romantic leaders, and probably every one of them would have owned him the king of letters. The 'Great Cham of literature,' as Smollett christened him, owed his pre-eminent position to the combined force of intellect, personality and conversation. Let us first glance at him as Macaulay has depicted him for us in the famous Literary Club, founded in 1764, which numbered among its members not only Johnson, Reynolds, Burke, and Goldsmith, but also Beauclerk, Garrick, Gibbon, Adam Smith, Sir William Scott, Sir Joseph Banks, the two Wartons, Stevens, Malone, Fox, and Boswell. 'There are assembled those heads which live for ever on the canvas of Reynolds. There are the spectacles of Burke and the tall thin form of Langton, the courtly sneer of Beauclerk and the beaming smile of Garrick, Gibbon tapping his snuff-box, and Sir Joshua with his trumpet in his ear. In the foreground is the strange figure which is as familiar to us as the figures of those among whom we have been brought up: the gigantic body, the huge massy face, seamed with the scars of disease, the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the grey wig with the scorched foretop, the dirty hands, the nails bitten and pared to the quick. We see the eyes and mouth moving with convulsive twitches; we see the heavy form rolling; we hear it puffing; and then comes the "Why, Sir!" and the "What

then, Sir!" and the "No, Sir!" and the "You don't see your way through the question, Sir!"'

Johnson's works make no very imposing list. In poetry the chief are: 'London' (1738), an imitation of Juvenal's third satire, of which Gray said that it 'has all the ease and all the spirit of an original,' and in which the famous line,

His works.

'Slow rises worth by poverty depressed,'

was printed in capitals in the first edition; the 'Vanity of Human Wishes' (1749), an imitation of the tenth satire of Juvenal; and the 'Prologue spoken at the opening of Drury Lane Theatre' (1747), part of which is quoted below. The two imitations of Juvenal are among the best imitations of a classic author that we possess. The spirit of the Roman satirist is admirably caught; Johnson never descends to Pope's peevish and venomous scorn and the malice of his poisoned sting; the objects of his satire are vice, knavery, and folly, not particular villains, knaves, and fools. But when all has been said that the utmost partiality can urge, Johnson's poetry remains little better than insignificant in quantity and in quality, and utterly unmoving to modern ears. The balanced epithets, often two in a line, are intolerably suggestive of verse written after a recipe, as in the following extract from the 'Vanity of Human Wishes':

'The *daring* Greeks deride the *martial* show,
And heap their valleys with the *gaudy* foe.
Th' *insulted* sea with *humbler* thoughts he gains;
A *single* skiff to speed his flight remains,
Th' *encumber'd* oar scarce leaves the *dreaded* coast
Through *purple* billows and a *floating* host.
The *bold* Bavarian in a *luckless* hour,
Tries the *dread* summits of *Caesarean* power.'

Johnson touches a much higher mark than this in the Drury Lane 'Prologue'; but it will be seen that he is fast in the grip of the couplet. It opens thus:

'When Learning's triumph o'er her barbarous foes
First reared the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose:

Each change of many-coloured life he drew,
Exhausted worlds and then imagined new:
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
And panting Time toiled after him in vain:
His powerful strokes presiding Truth impressed
And unresisted Passion stormed the breast.
Then Jonson came, instructed from the school,
To please in method and invent by rule;
His studious patience and laborious art
By regular approach assailed the heart:
Cold approbation gave the lingering bays,
For those who durst not censure scarce could praise.
A mortal born, he met the general doom,
But left, like Egypt's kings, a lasting tomb.
The wits of Charles found easier ways to fame,
Nor wished for Jonson's art or Shakespeare's flame;
Themselves they studied, as they felt they writ;
Intrigue was plot, obscenity was wit.
Vice always found a sympathetic friend;
They pleased their age and did not aim to mend.
Yet bards like these aspired to lasting praise,
And proudly hoped to pimp in future days.
Their cause was general, their supports were strong,
Their slaves were willing and their reign was long,
Till Shame regained the post that Sense betrayed,
And Virtue called Oblivion to her aid.'

When we turn to his prose, Johnson's original achievements do not at first sight appear much greater than in poetry. For what are they? The essays of the 'Rambler' and the 'Idler,' each running for two years, and the former ultimately, in collected form, attaining considerable popularity; the 'Dictionary of the English Language' (1755), a monument of immense labour, but lying hardly upon the confines of literature; 'Rasselas,' a didactic tale, composed in the evenings of one week to defray the expenses of his mother's funeral; and a series of 'Lives of the Poets' (1779-81), written for the booksellers to accompany a collected series of British Poets. Hence the question is often asked: 'What is the true explanation of Johnson's unquestioned literary eminence, and of the familiarity of the reading public with his character and appearance?' The explanation is not to be sought in his written works; indeed, if we had only these to judge by, we should assign him a creditable

The secret of Johnson's eminence.

place among the poets as a writer of dignified heroic couplets; among the essayists as a man who wrote sound common-sense in a somewhat cumbrous Latinised idiom; among the story-tellers as the author of a not very remarkable didactic tale; among scholars as the compiler of a 'Dictionary' which showed considerable research and diligence, but has necessarily—like all mere works of scholarship—been long superseded; and as a critic for his 'Lives of the Poets,' which is his best literary work. No, the true explanation is to be found in his genuine goodness of heart and sterling moral worth, in his supreme talent for conversation, and in the good fortune which brought him the best biographer that has ever written his hero's life. In Boswell's 'Life of Johnson' (1791) the dictator 'talks literature' over the space of nearly a quarter of a century. All critics are agreed as to the supreme merits of 'Bozzy's' work. 'Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets,' says Macaulay, 'Shakespeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers.'

Johnson as critic.

Apart from his conversation, Johnson left his mark upon English literature as a critic and as a prose stylist. His 'Lives of the Poets' was no mean achievement in its day: it far outdistanced all previous English works in literary criticism. It is as strong in general principles as it is unreliable in details of fact. He begins with Cowley, omitting therefore many of the greatest names, and including several mere poetasters; the best lives are considered to be those of Cowley, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Swift, Addison and Gray. Johnson's magisterial attitude is largely the result of the position he held among the wits and literati of the day. Moreover, it was characteristic of him not to question 'orthodox' beliefs. He reminds one of the schoolmen of the middle ages, who accepted the most preposterous premises unquestioningly, but argued from them with consummate skill. His whole code of criticism rested on a basis, which itself lay outside the pale of criticism; in other words, he considered poetry almost

exclusively from the didactic and logical point of view. He sometimes quoted an authority or precedent, but never reasoned from the nature of things. Again, his criticism is characterised by all the eighteenth-century self-satisfaction and incapability of appreciating the highest poetry. For him, English poetry began with Waller and culminated in Pope. Hence his judgments were often warped by prejudice or by sheer insensibility. Probably both came into play in the case of Milton, the latter especially in that of Gray. His opinion of Milton's 'Lycidas' is as clear an instance of mistaken criticism as the history of literature furnishes: 'the diction is harsh, the rimes uncertain, and the numbers unpleasing'; and this of the very poem which Pattison says 'is the touchstone of taste.' He was provokingly blind to the beauties of our earlier literature. Among the authors of his own day Richardson was almost the only one whom he unreservedly admired. But we can hardly wonder at these vagaries, since he thought the 'Aeneid' a greater poem than the 'Iliad,' and preferred Pope's 'Iliad' to Homer's. Yet due credit must be given to Johnson for the vigour and sagacity of many of his judgments. Of Pope he was a critic equally appreciative and acute, and indeed of all work on Classic lines. And outside this, his masculine intellect and independent judgment often make his decisions interesting and stimulating, even where we now regard them as mistaken. He is weakest in details and in points requiring a fine susceptibility; he is strongest in his mastery of general laws, in which he was much in advance of his age. His 'Lives' (quoted at some length on p. 128) did more for criticism as a science than all preceding critical works together. Byron said that it was the finest critical work extant.

Johnson's prose style.

Of Johnson's prose style much has been written. Its latest champion thinks 'we may surely by this time claim that Johnson has shaken off the inept cavillings of petty criticism, and has blunted the shafts of the witlings'—which seems to recall the forensic maxim: if you have a bad case, abuse the plaintiff's attorney. The plain truth is that Johnson has

more than one style. Here is a not unfavourable specimen of his earlier style, which has often been called sesquipedalian—his verdict on Shakespeare's 'Cymbeline.' 'This play has many just sentiments, some natural dialogues, and some pleasing scenes, but they are obtained at the expense of much incongruity. To remark the folly of the fiction, the absurdity of the conduct, the confusion of the names and manners of different times, and the impossibility of the events in any system of life, were to waste criticism upon unresisting imbecility, upon faults too evident for detection and too gross for aggravation.' There is no denying the clearness of structure and meaning here; equally there is no denying the offensiveness of 'unresisting imbecility.' Apparently Goldsmith and Johnson himself are among the 'witlings.' Goldsmith once said to him: 'If you were to make little fishes talk, they would talk like whales.' And Johnson, when asked, about 1780, how he liked a 'Rambler' that had been read, shook his head and answered, 'Too wordy.' On the other hand, in the style of the 'Lives of the Poets,' which is much more idiomatic and Saxon, there is little enough to censure and much to praise. Addison and Swift were rather dangerous models: the grace of the former would so easily degenerate into triviality, and the simplicity of the latter into slovenliness. With such carefully balanced and scaffolded structures as Johnson's sentences some loss of grace was inevitable; but he set up a standard of prose which could become traditional without danger, and into which later writers might again infuse what of grace, elegance, tenderness, and ease they could command.

Besides the quotation from the 'Life of Pope' already given, we select the famous Letter to Lord Chesterfield.

'7th February 1755.

MY LORD—I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of 'The World,' that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the public, were written by your lordship. To be so distinguished is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address, and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*;—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in public, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a patron, my lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind, but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the public should consider me as owing that to a patron, which providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,

Your lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

Sam. Johnson.'

After the 'Great Cham' himself, no member of the Literary Club was more famous than Goldsmith, who,

in singular consonance with his name, is said to have 'touched nothing he did not adorn.' He is a curious contrast to his friend Johnson, who talked better than he wrote; and who himself said of Goldsmith: "No man was more foolish when he had not a pen in his hand, or more wise when he had.' Garrick's epitaph, to which 'Retaliation' was 'Goldy's' reply, proves the truth of Johnson's words:

Oliver Goldsmith, 1728-1774.

'Here lies Poet Goldsmith, for shortness called Noll,
Who wrote like an angel, but talked like poor Poll.'

In writing, he certainly achieved very great success in several different departments, and five at least of his productions are masterpieces in their way: 'She Stoops to Conquer,' which has never since been surpassed in prose comedy; the 'Traveller' and the 'Deserted Village' in poetry; the 'Vicar of Wakefield' in fiction; and the 'Essays' in periodical literature. His prose style is the perfection of ease, entirely free from the 'tumid pomp' of the writers of Johnsonese; it can have no higher praise than this, that it is quite as easy to tire of Addison's 'Spectator' as of Goldsmith's 'Citizen of the World.' His famous novel is very weak in plot; but, in addition to the charm of the style, it brims over with good humour and real kindness of heart. It is the first genuine novel of domestic life. Abroad, it is more read than any other of our prose classics. Goethe called it a 'prose idyll,' and acknowledged that in the decisive moment of mental development the 'Vicar of Wakefield' had formed his education. 'That lofty and benevolent irony, that fair and indulgent view of all infirmities and faults, that meekness under all calamities, that equanimity under all changes and chances, and the whole train of kindred virtues, whatever names they bear, proved my best education.' Johnson wrote after Goldsmith's death: 'Let not his frailties be remembered: he was a very great man.'

Goldsmith's relation to the Romantic reaction is a very interesting question. The 'Traveller' and the 'Deserted Village' are about the last good poetry we are willing

to concede to the school of Pope, and even that concession is only a partial one: he belonged to that school as much as the times would let him. He opposed blank verse, and had no more sympathy with the forms of verse that Collins and Gray had introduced or with those of earlier English poetry than Johnson himself. The latter ridiculed them in verse:

Goldsmith and the Romantic reaction

'All is strange, yet nothing new,
Endless labour all along,
Endless labour to be wrong,
Phrase that time has flung away,
Uncouth words in disarray,
Tricked in antique ruff and bonnet,
Ode and elegy and sonnet.'

Goldsmith attacked them in the Dedication of the 'Traveller': 'Yet, however this art [poetry] may be neglected by the powerful, it is still in greater danger from the mistaken efforts of the learned to improve it. What criticisms have we not heard of late in favour of blank verse, and Pindaric odes, choruses, anapaests, and iambics, alliterative care and happy negligence! Every absurdity has now a champion to defend it.' Yet he is comparatively free from the conventional 'poetic diction'; and, though there is not that close communion with Nature that we find in later poets, in his fresh, clear, truthful descriptions of natural scenery we note one of the distinctively Romantic tendencies.

In poetry we select the 'village preacher' from the 'Deserted Village,' who may be compared with Chaucer's 'poor parson of a town'; in prose, a short extract from the 'Essays.'

'Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
The village preacher's modest mansion rose.
A man he was to all the country dear,
And passing rich with forty pounds a year,
Remote from towns he ran his godly race,
Nor e'er had changed, nor wished to change his place;
Unpractised he to fawn, or seek for power,
By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;

Far other aims his heart had learnt to prize,
More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise.
His house was known to all the vagrant train,
He chid their wanderings, but relieved their pain;
The long remembered beggar was his guest,
Whose beard descending swept his aged breast;
The ruined spendthrift, now no longer proud,
Claimed kindred there, and had his claims allowed;
The broken soldier, kindly bade to stay,
Sat by his fire, and talked the night away;
Wept o'er his wounds, or tales of sorrow done,
Shouldered his crutch, and showed how fields were won.
Pleased with his guests, the good man learned to glow,
And quite forgot their vices in their woe;
Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
His pity gave ere charity began.
  Thus to relieve the wretched was his pride,
And even his failings leaned to virtue's side;
But in his duty prompt at every call,
He watched and wept, he prayed and felt for all.
And, as a bird each fond endearment tries
To tempt its new-fledged offspring to the skies,
He tried each art, reproved each dull delay,
Allured to brighter worlds, and led the way.'

'Though fond of many acquaintances, I desire an intimacy only with a few. The man in black, whom I have often mentioned, is one whose friendship I could wish to acquire, because he possesses my esteem. His manners, it is true, are tinctured with some strange inconsistencies, and he may be justly termed a humourist in a nation of humourists. Though he is generous even to profusion, he affects to be thought a prodigy of parsimony and prudence; though his conversation be replete with the most sordid and selfish maxims, his heart is dilated with the most unbounded love. I have known him profess himself a man-hater, while his cheek was glowing with compassion; and, while his looks were softened into pity, I have heard him use the language of most unbounded ill-nature. Some affect humanity and tenderness, others boast of having such dispositions from nature; but he is the only man I ever knew who seemed ashamed of his natural benevolence. He takes as much pains to hide his feelings as any hypocrite would to conceal his indifference; but on every unguarded

moment the mask drops off, and reveals him to the most superficial observer.

In one of our late excursions into the country, happening to discourse upon the provision that was made for the poor in England, he seemed amazed how any of his countrymen could be so foolishly weak as to relieve occasional objects of charity, when the laws had made such ample provision for their support. "In every parish-house," says he, "the poor are supplied with food, clothes, fire, and a bed to lie on; they want no more, I desire no more myself; yet still they seem discontented. I am surprised at the inactivity of our magistrates in not taking up such vagrants, who are only a weight upon the industrious, I am surprised that people are found to relieve them, when they must be at the same time sensible that it, in some measure, encourages idleness, extravagance and imposture Were I to advise any man for whom I had the least regard, I would caution him by all means not to be imposed upon by their false pretences; let me assure you, sir, they are impostors every one of them, and rather merit a prison than relief."

He was proceeding in this strain, earnestly to dissuade me from an imprudence of which I am seldom guilty, when an old man, who still had about him the remnants of tattered finery, implored our compassion. He assured us that he was no common beggar, but forced into the shameful profession, to support a dying wife, and five hungry children. Being prepossessed against such falsehoods, his story had not the least influence upon me, but it was quite otherwise with the man in black; I could see it visibly operate upon his countenance, and effectually interrupt his harangue. I could easily perceive that his heart burned to relieve the five starving children, but he seemed ashamed to discover his weakness to me. While he thus hesitated between compassion and pride, I pretended to look another way, and he seized the opportunity of giving the poor petitioner a piece of silver, bidding him at the same time, in order that I should hear, go work for his bread, and not tease passengers with such impertinent falsehoods for the future.'

Edmund Burke, 1729-1797.

There remains one great prose writer of last century who can be represented by no one but himself —Edmund Burke, the greatest political thinker who has ever devoted himself to the practice of English politics. His best works are the 'Thoughts on the Present Discontents' (1770), the two 'Speeches on

America' (1774-1775), 'Reflections on the Revolution in France' (1790), and the 'Letters on a Regicide Peace' (1796). The earlier of these works show a political foresight and sagacity almost without parallel; in the later 'the sanity and probity which so eminently distinguished his character are clouded by his rabid prejudice against France' and 'that mother of all evil, the French Revolution.' Burke's powers as an orator in prose grew to the last; but if we desire to admire and respect him equally we shall read in preference those works which belong to the time before 'this strange madness of anger seized and convulsed him.' He repeatedly forecast the course of events correctly, and mapped out the policy that would have to be undertaken in future emergencies with an accuracy that can only be called prophetic. Burke was before all things an orator. Johnson said of him: 'After five minutes' talk you would say, "This is an extraordinary man." He is never humdrum. Burke's talk is the ebullition of his mind; he does not talk from a desire of distinction, but because his mind is full.' Hence it is probable that in his case the reader of his oratory is at no disadvantage as compared with the hearer—a view that is confirmed by Goldsmith's clever skit in 'Retaliation.'

> 'Here lies our good Edmund, whose genius was such,
> We scarcely can praise it or blame it too much;
> Who, born for the universe, narrowed his mind,
> And to party gave up what was meant for mankind.
> Though fraught with all learning, yet straining his throat
> To persuade Tommy Townshend to lend him a vote:
> Who, too deep for his hearers, still went on refining,
> And thought of convincing, while they thought of dining;
> Though equal to all things, for all things unfit,
> Too nice for a statesman, too proud for a wit,
> For a patriot too cool; for a drudge disobedient,
> And too fond of the *right* to pursue the *expedient*.'

His style.

Though Burke can be called neither our greatest politician, nor our greatest public orator, nor our greatest political philosopher, he is far and away the greatest example we have of the three in one person. But for his own statement, few would have

surmised that Dryden was his model in prose. His magnificence of style is due to three things. First, the strong feeling which everywhere manifests itself. Second, his extensive knowledge, which prevented his ever treating a subject pettily and freed him from the narrowness of cut-and-dried formulas in politics. His thoroughness, breadth and profundity, as well as his way of winding himself into his subjects like a serpent, account for his moderate success in public speaking. Third, his comprehensive thought, which would not allow him to take advantage of a narrowing down of survey. His style for the most part corresponded with the imperial nature of his subjects: the freedom of a nation, the fortunes of great societies, the inviolability of law and fidelity. He is, says Craik, 'the writer of a prose illumined as with fire; enthusiastic and yet supremely logical: fearless and yet absolutely obedient to order and to law: eloquent and yet restrained: stirred by every popular movement, and yet suggestive and philosophical. More completely than any man he showed, in style no less perfectly than in spirit and in sympathy, all that was most typical of the best genius of his age—its restraint, its philosophy, its obedience to order and to law, and its gift of literary instinct.'

Our illustration is from the 'Speech on Conciliation with America.'

'I am sensible, sir, that all which I have asserted in my detail is admitted in the gross, but that quite a different conclusion is drawn from it. America, gentlemen say, is a noble object. It is an object well worth fighting for. Certainly it is, if fighting a people is the best way of gaining them. Gentlemen in this respect will be led to their choice of means by their complexions and their habits Those who understand the military art will of course have some predilection for it. Those who wield the thunder of the state may have more confidence in the efficacy of arms. But I confess, possibly for want of this knowledge, my opinion is much more in favour of prudent management than of force; considering force not as an odious but a feeble instrument, for preserving a people so numerous, so active, so growing, so spirited as this, in a profitable and subordinate connection with us.

First, sir, permit me to observe, that the use of force alone is but

temporary. It may subdue for a moment, but it does not remove the necessity of subduing again; and a nation is not governed, which is perpetually to be conquered.

My next objection is its uncertainty. Terror is not always the effect of force, and an armament is not victory. If you do not succeed, you are without resource, for, conciliation failing, force remains; but, force failing, no further hope of reconciliation is left. Power and authority are sometimes bought by kindness, but they can never be begged as alms by an impoverished and defeated violence

A further objection to force is, that you impair the object by your very endeavours to preserve it. The thing you fought for is not the thing you recover; but depreciated, sunk, wasted, and consumed in the contest. Nothing less will content me than whole America. I do not choose to consume its strength along with our own, because in all parts it is the British strength that I consume I do not choose to be caught by a foreign enemy at the end of this exhausting conflict; still less in the midst of it. I may escape, but I can make no insurance against such an event. Let me add, that I do not choose wholly to break the American spirit, because it is the spirit that has made the country

Lastly, we have no sort of experience in favour of force as an instrument in the rule of our colonies. Their growth and their utility has been owing to methods altogether different Our ancient indulgence has been said to be pursued to a fault. It may be so. But we know, if feeling is evidence, that our fault was more tolerable than our attempt to mend it, and our sin far more salutary than our penitence.

These, sir, are my reasons for not entertaining that high opinion of untried force, by which many gentlemen, for whose sentiments in other particulars I have great respect, seem to be so greatly captivated.'

Blake and Burns belong wholly to the new school; they anticipate the nineteenth century in the eighteenth. On the other hand, three poets (whose surnames by a curious double coincidence all begin with C) might be taken as 'the incarnate transition' from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century: Crabbe, Cowper, and Coleridge. But Crabbe never altered very much from first to last; throughout his career he combined features from both periods. In Coleridge the antagonistic styles are seen in greater extremes than in any other poet; but in

other respects his early poetry is negligible. Cowper serves our purpose best, because in him the transition is seen in gradual process. He had never been satisfied with the eighteenth century medium, and as a young man had abandoned poetry till he could find a style more suited to the thoughts within him; the problem lay before him and he had to work his way through it. Meanwhile, living in quiet retirement at Olney, he had seasons of religious depression that ended in recurrent attacks of madness, and after 1780 he took to poetry, partly at the suggestion of friends, as a relief and an occupation. The volume of poems that appeared in 1782 was pronounced 'a dull sermon in very indifferent verse.' The acuter critics alone perceived the frequent force of his writing, his quiet humour, and his fine touches of criticism. Yet the work shows no trace of naturalism, except perhaps in the minuteness of detail with which some subjects are treated. In 1785, however, appeared 'The Task,' the importance of which it is hardly possible to exaggerate; 'John Gilpin' was printed in the same volume. The explanation of the title is interesting. Lady Austen, when staying at Olney, had urged Cowper to write a poem in blank verse; his reply was a request for a subject. 'Oh! you can never be in want of a subject; you can write on any—write upon this Sofa.' Thus the poem, like several others of his, was a 'Task'; and the first book was on 'The Sofa': 'I sing the Sofa.' The first hundred lines or so keep to the subject, treated in a mock-heroic style; but then comes a notable change.

William Cowper, 1731-1800.

'The sofa suits
The gouty limb, 'tis true; but gouty limb,
Though on a sofa, may I never feel:
For I have loved the rural walk through lanes
Of grassy swarth, close cropped by nibbling sheep,
And skirted thick with intertexture firm
Of thorny boughs: have loved the rural walk
O'er hills, through valleys, and by river's brink
E'er since, a truant boy, I passed my bounds,
To enjoy a ramble on the banks of Thames.'

Here we see the true naturalism beginning as it were

suddenly. Almost all his earlier poetry was in the couplet; the 'Task' is in blank verse. It is surely more than a mere fancy to trace a suggestion of the momentous change from Classic to Romantic in the titles of the several books: I. 'The Sofa'; II. 'The Time-Piece'; III. 'The Garden'; IV. 'The Winter Evening'; V. 'The Winter Morning Walk'; VI. 'The Winter Walk at Noon.'

Appreciation

Thomson's 'Seasons' was published complete in 1730, and his mantle had fallen on no intervening poet. The 'Task' is a very unequal poem; its importance lies in the fact that the worn-out didactic eighteenth-century manner is blended in the most extraordinary way with the coming naturalism; such words as 'arthritic,' 'oscitancy,' 'stercoraceous,' with such Miltonic lines as

> 'The unambiguous footsteps of the God
> Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
> And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds',

never was such an old garment patched with new cloth. Begun and ended in the summer of 1783, the poem made an immediate success, and Cowper was at once recognised as the first poet of the day. Since then it may have owed some popularity and some unpopularity to its religious tone—his aim was to show that religion is a fit theme for poetry—but its tenderness, playfulness and love of nature are fully recognised and appreciated by the French critic, Sainte-Beuve, who is certainly not biased by religious sympathy. The pathos of some of the minor poems, 'On the Receipt of My Mother's Picture' and 'To Mary,' is unsurpassed and unsurpassable. Into the spirit of Cowper's best work have entered, besides the love of nature, a deep tenderness and a true feeling for humanity, that had not been equalled in his century. He is attractive whenever he shows his real self, as in his 'Letters,' which are the best in our language.

Our selection is 'To Mary' in poetry; and in prose, part of a letter to the Rev. William Unwin, the son of 'Mary,' dated September 24, 1786.

TO MARY.

The twentieth year is well-nigh past,
Since first our sky was overcast;
Ah, would that this might be the last!
My Mary!

Thy spirits have a fainter flow,
I see thee daily weaker grow,
'Twas my distress that brought thee low,
My Mary!

Thy needles, once a shining store,
For my sake restless heretofore,
Now rust disused, and shine no more,
My Mary!

For though thou gladly wouldst fulfil
The same kind office for me still,
Thy sight now seconds not thy will,
My Mary!

But well thou playedst the housewife's part,
And all thy threads with magic art
Have wound themselves about this heart,
My Mary!

Thy indistinct expressions seem
Like language uttered in a dream,
Yet me they charm, whate'er the theme,
My Mary!

Thy silver locks, once auburn bright,
Are still more lovely in my sight
Than golden beams of orient light,
My Mary!

For, could I view nor them nor thee,
What sight worth seeing could I see?
The sun would rise in vain for me,
My Mary!

Partakers of thy sad decline,
Thy hands their little force resign;
Yet, gently prest, press gently mine,
My Mary!

Such feebleness of limbs thou provest,
That now at every step thou movest
Upheld by two, yet still thou lovest,
My Mary!

And still to love, though prest with ill,
In wintry age to feel no chill,
With me is to be lovely still,
My Mary!

But ah! by constant heed I know,
How oft the sadness that I show
Transforms thy smiles to looks of woe,
My Mary!

And should my future lot be cast
With much resemblance of the past,
Thy worn-out heart will break at last,
My Mary!'

'You have had your troubles, and we ours. This day three weeks your mother received a letter from Mr. Newton, which she has not yet answered, nor is likely to answer hereafter It gave us both much concern, but her more than me; I suppose because my mind being necessarily occupied in my work, I had not so much leisure to browse upon the wormwood it contained The report of it is a direct accusation of me, and of her an accusation implied, that we have both deviated into forbidden paths, and lead a life unbecoming the Gospel, that many of my friends in London are grieved, and the simple people of Olney astonished, that he never so much doubted of my restoration to Christian privileges as now;—in short, that I converse too much with people of the world, and find too much pleasure in doing so. He concludes with putting your mother in mind that there is still an intercourse between London and Olney, by which he means to insinuate that we cannot offend against the decorum that we are bound to observe, but the news of it will most certainly be conveyed to him We do not at all doubt it;—we never knew a lie hatched at Olney that waited long for a bearer, and though we do not wonder to find ourselves made the subjects of false accusation in a place ever fruitful of such productions, we do and must wonder a little that he should listen to them with so much credulity. I say this because if he had heard only the truth, or had believed no more than the truth, he would not, I think, have found either me censurable or your mother. And that *she* should be suspected of irregularities is the more wonderful (for wonderful it would be at any rate), because she sent him not long before a letter conceived in such strains of piety and spirituality as ought to have convinced him that she at least was no wanderer. But what is the fact, and how do we spend our time in reality? What are the deeds

for which we have been represented as thus criminal? Our present course of life differs in nothing from that which we have both held these thirteen years, except that, after great civilities shown us, and many advances made on the part of the Throcks, we visit them. That we visit also at Gayhurst; that we have frequently taken airings with my cousin in her carriage; and that I have sometimes taken a walk with her on a Sunday evening and sometimes by myself, which however your mother has never done. These are the only novelties in our practice; and if by these procedures, so inoffensive in themselves, we yet give offence, offence must needs be given. God and our own consciences acquit us, and we acknowledge no other judges.

The two families with whom we have picked up this astonishing intercourse are as harmless in their conversation and manners as can be found anywhere And as to my poor cousin, the only crime that she is guilty of against the people of Olney is that she has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and administered comfort to the sick, except indeed that, by her great kindness, she has given us a little lift in point of condition and circumstances, and has thereby excited envy in some who have not the knack of rejoicing in the prosperity of others. And this I take to be the root of the matter

My dear William, I do not know that I should have teased your nerves and spirits with this disagreeable theme, had not Mr Newton talked of applying to you for particulars. He would have done it, he says, when he saw you last, but had not time. You are now qualified to inform him as minutely as we ourselves could of all our enormities! Adieu!

Our sincerest love to yourself and yours,

Wm. C.'

CHAPTER IX.

THE AGE OF WORDSWORTH (1798-1832 A.D.).

The limits of date

THE Classic period may be held to have closed any time between 1780 and 1798. But later than the year of the publication of the 'Lyrical Ballads' (1798) of Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Magna Charta of the re-enfranchisement of English poetry, it is impossible to date the meeting of the two ages, although the critics and the reading public lagged far behind the poets, and even Byron would have been a poet of the Classic school, for which he professed the highest admiration, if the tendencies of the time had not been too strong for him. How slow the critical and reading public were in appreciating the men who were the apostles of the Romantic movement may be seen in the treatment accorded to Wordsworth, whose theories and whose poetry, which is infinitely greater than his theories, were during most of his life received with contempt and ridicule. But none of these things—contempt, sneers, hostile criticism, parody, silence—moved him; he held on in spite of them all, slowly but surely his following increased, until at last, towards the close of his life, he was the acknowledged monarch of English letters, and even in danger of the reaction that inevitably follows an excess of popularity. The downward limit of 1832 seems the best barrier between the age of Wordsworth and that of Tennyson. Of the six representative writers for whom alone we can find room in this chapter, Shelley and Byron had been dead eight years or more in 1832; Scott died in that year; Coleridge and Lamb had two more years to live, but their work was done; Wordsworth

did not die till 1850, but nearly all his best poetry was written. Of the writers who made the next age illustrious, Tennyson, Carlyle and Macaulay had begun to publish; but all their works of greatest moment fall after 1832.

Importance of the period

Perhaps this period of little more than thirty years is of unduly magnified importance to us, because it is neither so near as to lack our respect nor so far off as to alienate our sympathy, and because of the peculiarly entrancing interest in which it abounds. But in sober fact, no other age in English literature, not even the Elizabethan, can vie with this in combined mass and rapidity of production; in splendour of literary achievement it is surpassed by the Elizabethan age alone. It contains eight writers of the first class, two of whom, Coleridge and Scott, we might almost reckon as 'double firsts,' in poetry and in prose. The productions of a single year were sometimes of extraordinary intrinsic merit; for example, the year 1816 saw the production of Jane Austen's 'Emma,' often regarded as her masterpiece; Byron's 'Siege of Corinth,' 'Prisoner of Chillon,' and the third canto of 'Childe Harold'; Coleridge's 'Christabel'; Scott's 'Antiquary,' 'Black Dwarf,' and 'Old Mortality'; and Shelley's 'Alastor'—to mention first-class writers only. With such an overwhelming output of work of such a quality, the necessity for rigid exclusion and careful selection in a book of this character must be more than ever apparent.

It has been our purpose, from the time when the two schools became clearly distinguished, to keep Romantic and Classic work marked off by their distinctive characteristics in a way that has probably not been attempted in an elementary book before. We have seen throughout the eighteenth century how the way was being prepared for the later Romantics by Thomson, Collins, Gray, the Wartons, Percy, Chatterton, Cowper, Burns and Blake. We have now to remark those characteristics of the Romanticism of this age which are peculiar to itself and distinguish it from that of the Elizabethan age; and to see how Wordsworth, alike by what he accomplished and by the

admission of friends and foes, was the apostle of the movement.

We have already seen that the degree of similarity between the age of Spenser, Milton, and Shakespeare and that of Wordsworth is sufficiently great, especially when they are contrasted with the intervening Classic period, to justify the application to them of the common term Romantic. But if, instead of conjointly contrasting them with the eighteenth century, we compare them with each other, we shall find in them features markedly dissimilar. This dissimilarity is partly represented by the contrast between the drama and the novel: that was the age of the drama, this is the age of the novel; that was the age of action, this is the age of introspection. True, the poetry of the age of Wordsworth is more noteworthy and characteristic than its fiction, but that detracts little, if anything, from the force of the illustration. For the salient fact is this: the Elizabethans came into a rich heritage of *life*, which they had to investigate and explore and make their own; their world was a world of action and therefore their literature is before all things a literature of action; they did not often pause to reflect or analyse or balance pros and cons, they acted by impulse or by intuition. On the other hand, their descendants of the early nineteenth century were necessarily much more self-conscious, critical, introspective; they were keenly alive to the literary history of the intervening centuries, which they regarded with aversion, or sympathy, or an alternation of the two; the problems of life lay heavy upon some or all of them, not least probably upon those in whose works they seem to have left the fewest traces. Lastly, the age of Wordsworth regarded external nature in a way unknown to the Elizabethans, who, apart from Shakespeare, appear to have been unable even to assign flowers to their proper seasons.

The two Romantic periods.

Professor Herford, in a passage marked by all his critical acumen, philosophic insight, and grace of language, answers the question 'What was Romanticism?' with special reference to its manifestations in the early nineteenth century: from it

Romanticism explained.

we quote the following sentences. 'Primarily it was an extraordinary development of imaginative sensibility. At countless points the universe of sense and thought acquired a new potency of response and appeal to man, a new capacity of ministering to, and mingling with, his richest and intensest life. Glory of lake and mountain, grace of childhood, dignity of the untaught peasant, wonder of faery, mystery of the Gothic aisle, radiance of Attic marble—all these springs of the poet's inspiration and the artist's joy began to flow, not at once but in prolonged unordered succession; and not within a limited area, but throughout Western Europe, and pre-eminently in Germany, England, and France. . . To rekindle the soul of the past, or to reveal a soul where no eye had yet discerned it; to call up Helen or Isolde, or to invest lake and mountain with "the light that never was, on sea or land"; to make the natural appear supernatural, as Wordsworth and Coleridge put it, or the supernatural natural—were but different avenues to the world of Romance. . . . Like every other English version of a great European movement, English Romanticism had its peculiar originality and strength, and its peculiar limitations. Its chief glory lay, without doubt, in the extraordinarily various intimate and subtle interpretation of the world of "external Nature," and of that other world of wonder and romance which the familiar comradeship of Nature generates in the mind of man. Neither France nor Germany made any real advance upon Rousseau's vivid and impassioned landscape painting. But for Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, and Coleridge, Nature is an inexhaustible source and provocative of lovely imaginings. Wordsworth conveys the loneliness of the mountains, Shelley the tameless energies of wind, Keats the embalmed darkness of verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways, with an intensity which makes all other Nature poetry seem pale.'

The same brilliant and scholarly writer summarises the non-formal differences between the Classic and Romantic schools in two sentences: 'Classicism opposes to the arbitrariness of fancy a pervading rationality; to the mysterious

the intelligible; to the unpruned variety of nature the limitations of an eclectic art; to passion glorified and dwelt on, passion restrained and somewhat disparaged. Romanticism, on the other hand, makes prominent the qualities conspicuous in the youth of a nation: bright aimless fancy, awe of the unknown, eager uncritical delight in the abundance of nature; impetuous joy and sorrow, breaking forth into such free and instant tears and smiles as the Argonauts uttered, or the comrades of Odysseus.' This is, like Jaques, so 'full of matter,' that the student will do well to apply it and test its truth again and again in his study of the poets of the two periods, or in reading the works of two such typical writers as Pope and Wordsworth. It may be useful to repeat here what were in effect the watchwords of the two schools: of the one, order, harmony, restraint, common-sense; of the other, variety, contrast, liberty, imagination. The dangers were, on the one hand, of order degenerating into routine, harmony into mere mechanism, restraint into durance vile, and common-sense into formulas; on the other hand, of variety giving place to variegation, contrast to wilfulness, liberty to licence, and imagination to mere idiosyncrasy. In feeble and incompetent hands, Classic poetry tends to become dull, mechanical, monotonous, prosaic in the last degree; Romantic poetry to become unwieldy, hysterical, involved, noisy, vulgar, inharmonious.

Contrasted with Classicism.

We saw in Chapter VI. with what contempt the early Classic poets looked back on their Romantic predecessors,—an example that was followed with added bitterness by several of the nineteenth century Romantics. For instance, Keats in his 'Sleep and Poetry' thus characterises his predecessors, in a passage equally noteworthy for its Romantic opinions and for its Romantic heroic couplets:

Keats on the Classic poets.

'a schism
Nurtured by foppery and barbarism
Made great Apollo blush for this his land
Men were thought wise who could not understand
His glories, with a puling infant's force

They sway'd about upon a rocking-horse,
And thought it Pegasus. Ah! dismal-soul'd!
The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer night collected still to make
The morning precious: Beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile, so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it,—no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepit standard out,
Mark'd with most flimsy mottoes, and in large
The name of one Boileau!'

The early nineteenth century

A few special features of the literature of this time deserve a passing mention. The revival of interest in ballads, due to Percy, was more than maintained. The productions of early periods and nameless minstrels, belonging as it were to the childhood of literature, they are the very antithesis of what the Classics delighted to honour. Scott wrote of Percy's 'Reliques': 'nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently or with half the enthusiasm' Ballads generally received wider recognition; the text of genuine old ballads was treated with reverence; and the composition of 'Ballads' became something of a poetic fashion. Another feature was the nascent influence of Germany upon English literature. In poetry it was in some degree a wave of Percy's influence rebounding upon its native shore; but a more wide-spread and more lasting effect was produced, both on poetry and prose, by the transcendental philosophy of Kant. This too was the age of the starting of the reviews which played so important a part in the life of the century; the Liberal 'Edinburgh Review' (conservative enough in literature) in 1802, the Conservative 'Quarterly' in 1809, and 'Blackwood's Magazine' in 1817. Again,

it was the age of the 'great school' of Shakespearean critics, Coleridge, Lamb, and Hazlitt—all so great that one knows not in what order to place their names. The eighteenth century can show plenty of Shakespearean dry-as-dusts; but it has not a single critic of Shakespeare (except Theobald) worthy to hold a candle to these three men, whose unerring justness of appreciation, brilliance and insight place them at the head of dramatic critics. Lastly, there was a wondrous revival of prose fiction, which will be dealt with in connection with the work of Scott.

The 'Lake School'

It was the fashion of the critics of the 'Edinburgh Review' to regard Wordsworth as the leader of what they were pleased to call the 'Lake School,' because he, Coleridge and Southey were supposed to have formed a 'brotherhood of poets,' who 'haunted for some time about the lakes of Cumberland' This was a convenient supposition for the satirists of the time, one of whom composed the epigram:

'They lived in the lakes—an appropriate quarter
For poems diluted with plenty of water.'

But literary history is not so uncritical as to need Coleridge's distinct denial that any such 'school' existed; the three men were friends—Coleridge and Southey married sisters—and influenced each other; but the resemblance between them is hardly greater than between any other three Romantic poets. The 'Lake School' was Wordsworth, to whom we now turn.

William Wordsworth, 1770-1850.

There is no space for biography in this chapter. For the most part Wordsworth lived a quiet life near the English lakes in the midst of the beloved mountains, which left their mark upon much of his poetry. But his disposition and character were by no means so 'quiet' as they have often been represented. The popular conception of the poet as a prim, staid, if not stolid, Puritan, as a self-absorbed, uninteresting recluse, as characterised by a calm, passionless aloofness from the world of human interests, has been proved to be a *mis*conception. He was a man of

concentrated energies and impassioned contemplation; and some power of entering sympathetically into such states of being is necessary to the full enjoyment of his highest poetry. That highest poetry is scattered up and down his works,[1] for Wordsworth is not a poet of 'masterpieces.' He is rather a poet of unscalable heights of sublimity, and almost unfathomable depths of bathos and commonplace. Both extremes are exemplified in the 'Lyrical Ballads,' to which should be added at least 'The Solitary Reaper,' 'To the Cuckoo' (1804), 'I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,' the 'Ode to Duty,' 'Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle,' 'Character of the Happy Warrior,' 'Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood,' and the pick of the 'Sonnets.'

The 'Lyrical Ballads.'

The importance of the 'Lyrical Ballads' lies in the facts, that the Romantic aspirations we have seen growing in force throughout the eighteenth century found most complete poetical expression therein, and that in the prefaces and appendix of the later editions Wordsworth put forth and defended the poetic theories which were exemplified in the poems themselves. The 'Lyrical Ballads' therefore are to modern poetry what Rossetti's 'Annunciation' is to modern painting, they enriched the world of English poetry as no one volume has since done. The early association of the joint authors, Wordsworth and Coleridge, is probably the most important passage in both their lives, and, often as the story has been told (*e.g.* by Wordsworth in a note at the head of 'We are Seven'), it must be repeated here. In 1793 Coleridge read Wordsworth's 'Descriptive Sketches' and was instantly and violently moved by it. In his impulsive manner he wrote immediately to his friends: 'The giant Wordsworth—God love him!' In 1795-1796, when they became intimate, each felt that their friendship was by far the most momentous thing that had ever happened to them. In 1797, Wordsworth and his sister removed to Alfoxden in Somerset on purpose to be near Coleridge, who had settled at Nether Stowey, and for the

[1] Much of it is brought together in the Golden Treasury 'Wordsworth' (Macmillan, 2s 6d.).

next year they lived intermittently in 'productive friendship.' The two poets were widely different in training and in certain intellectual characteristics; on the other hand they had some deeply-rooted affinities. The result of their intercourse was two-fold. In the first place they influenced each other. Coleridge rose from a fourth-rate poet to one of the first order, and wrote nearly everything of his that has enduring worth within two years or so from the beginning of their friendship. Coleridge's influence on Wordsworth, though less striking, was of great value; for one thing it helped to rid him of those morbid ideas which had come of brooding over the French Revolution. In the second place, there was a recognition on both sides that each of their natures had limits which they could not overpass. They prepared to produce a joint volume; but the partnership became less and less close; they found out by degrees the wide poetical diversity between them, and realised the consequent impracticability of joint authorship. In the end, so much more fecund and responsive was the genius of Wordsworth, that his nineteen contributions were hardly kept in countenance by the four of Coleridge, although the latter included the finest poem in the volume, 'The Ancient Mariner.' The original title was 'Lyrical Ballads, with a few other Poems.' Among the latter was Wordsworth's most memorable contribution to the volume, neither lyrical nor a ballad, the 'Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey.' Such is in brief the external history of this remarkable book, the joint production of which Wordsworth refers to in his 'Prelude':

'That summer, under whose indulgent skies
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Unchecked, or loitered mid her sylvan combs,
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner,
And I, associate with such labour, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall.'

Coleridge on the 'Lyrical Ballads'

But of far deeper import than what has just been related is what may well be called the internal history of the 'Lyrical Ballads.' It is characteristic of Coleridge that his record of the partnership should deal with this side of its history. 'The thought,' he says, 'suggested itself (to which of us I do not recollect) that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves. In this idea originated the plan of the "Lyrical Ballads"; in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention from the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us.' In a word, Coleridge's part was to humanise and familiarise the supernatural, Wordsworth's to exalt and transfigure the natural and the common.

The reader will be helped to a fuller comprehension of this important passage, if we append Dowden's comment upon it, and add one or two illustrations from the 'Ballads' themselves. 'Coleridge indicates precisely wherein lay the importance of the publication of this little volume in the history of our literature. There existed two powerful tendencies in the literature of the

time, each of which was liable to excess when it operated alone, each of which needed to work in harmony with the other, and to take into itself something from the other—the tendency to realism, seen in such a poem as Crabbe's "The Village," and the tendency towards romance, seen in its more extravagant forms in such writings as those of Matthew Gregory Lewis. Realism might easily have become hard, dry, literal, as we sometimes see it in Crabbe. Romance might easily have degenerated into a coarse revel in material horrors. English poetry needed, first, that romance should be saved and ennobled by the presence and the power of truth—truth moral and psychological; and secondly, that naturalism, without losing any of its fidelity to fact, should be saved and ennobled by the presence and the power of imagination—"the light that never was, on sea or land" This precisely was what Coleridge and Wordsworth contributed to English poetry in their joint volume of "Lyrical Ballads," which in consequence may justly be described as marking an epoch in the history of our literature.'

Our extracts are from the 'Lines written above Tintern' and the 'Ancient Mariner' respectively.

'Though absent long,
These forms of beauty have not been to me,
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind
With tranquil restoration .—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure; such, perhaps,
As may have had no trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lighten'd :—that serene and blessed mood,

In which the affections gently lead us on,
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft,
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless day-light; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart;
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! Thou wanderer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!'

'"I fear thee, ancient Mariner!
I fear thy skinny hand!
And thou art long, and lank, and brown,
As is the ribb'd sea-sand.

The Wedding-Guest feareth that a spirit is talking to him,

I fear thee and thy glittering eye,
And thy skinny hand, so brown."—
Fear not, fear not, thou Wedding Guest!
This body dropt not down.

But the ancient Mariner assureth him of his bodily life, and proceedeth to relate his horrible penance

Alone, alone, all, all alone,
Alone on a wide, wide sea!
And never a saint took pity on
My soul in agony.

The many men, so beautiful!
And they all dead did lie:
And a thousand thousand slimy things
Liv'd on; and so did I.

He despiseth the creatures of the calm

I look'd upon the rotting sea,
And drew my eyes away,
I look'd upon the rotting deck,
And there the dead men lay.

And envieth that they should live, and so many lie dead.

I look'd to Heaven, and tried to pray;
But or ever a prayer had gusht,
A wicked whisper came, and made
My heart as dry as dust.

I closed my lids, and kept them close,
And the balls like pulses beat;
For the sky and the sea, and the sea and the sky
Lay like a load on my weary eye,
And the dead were at my feet.

The cold sweat melted from their limbs,
Nor rot nor reek did they:
The look with which they look'd on me
Had never pass'd away.

But the curse liveth for him in the eye of the dead men.

An orphan's curse would drag to hell
A spirit from on high;
But oh! more horrible than that
Is the curse in a dead man's eye!
Seven days, seven nights, I saw that curse,
And yet I could not die.

The moving Moon went up the sky,
And no where did abide:
Softly she was going up,
And a star or two beside—
Her beams bemock'd the sultry main,
Like April hoar-frost spread,
But where the ship's huge shadow lay,
The charmed water burnt alway
A still and awful red.

In his loneliness and fixedness he yearneth towards the journeying Moon, and the stars that still sojourn, yet still move onward, and everywhere the blue sky belongs to them, and is their appointed rest, and their native country and their own natural homes, which they enter unannounced, as lords that are certainly expected, and yet there is a silent joy at their arrival

Beyond the shadow of the ship,
I watch'd the water-snakes:
They mov'd in tracks of shining white,
And when they rear'd, the elfish light
Fell off in hoary flakes.

By the light of the Moon he beholdeth God's creatures of the great calm.

Within the shadow of the ship
I watch'd their rich attire:
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,
They coil'd and swam; and every track
Was a flash of golden fire.

O happy living things! no tongue
Their beauty might declare;
A spring of love gush'd from my heart,
And I bless'd them unaware!
Sure my kind saint took pity on me,
And I bless'd them unaware!

Their beauty and their happi-

He blesseth them in his heart.

The self-same moment I could pray;
And from my neck so free
The Albatross fell off, and sank
Like lead into the sea '

The spell begins to break

Wordsworth's poetic theories, largely right but in part overstated, lie beyond the scope of this book. But we take him and Scott as *the* representatives of the poetry and prose of the age, and therefore it is necessary to make clear what his practice did for English poetry. He 'took stock' of the language of poetry, cleared out a lot of old rubbish which had long ceased to have any but a conventional poetic value, and made available for poetic use many words that had long been falsely regarded as unpoetic. And this is only typical of what he did in other departments; he extended likewise the domain of poetry in the realm of nature, not external nature alone, but in the lower ranks of human nature too. The eighteenth century had clung to the surface of things like a limpet, never penetrating beneath, Wordsworth habitually worked from the surface towards the centre, and from this characteristic all his reforms emanated. As one of his disciples says, 'Through seeing in many things which had hitherto been deemed unfit subjects for poetry a deeper truth and beauty than in those which had been most dealt with, he did a wider service to poetry than any other poet of his time.'

Some of Wordsworth's reforms

There is another debt that we owe to him. We turn to other poets for amusement, for intellectual stimulus, for the culture of the emotions; we turn to Wordsworth for moral and spiritual consolation. He speaks direct to the soul. Not that he is by any means a distinctly religious poet. His artistic canon is expressed in these words: 'his works, as well as those of other poets, should not be considered as developing all the influences which his own heart recognised, but rather those which he felt able as an artist to display to advantage.' And these were, above all, the influences of Nature. He is the high priest of our restored communion with Nature. To Milton, who knew Nature chiefly through books, she was a glorious spectacle, to Wordsworth she

Wordsworth and Nature.

was a living power. Milton's epithets are expressive 'of a real emotion in the spectator's soul, not of any quality detected by keen insight in the objects themselves.' This insight was the secret of Wordsworth's strength. 'Most eighteenth century poets in like manner either content themselves with the mere description of single scenes in Nature, or they transfer to these scenes their own emotions. It is Wordsworth who first thinks of Nature habitually as a whole, and treats of the active influence which she may exert on the mind of man. It is not every one, however, as he says, who is capable of receiving all that Nature is ready to give. It is useless to approach her except with observing eyes and an open heart. The accuracy of Wordsworth's own observation of Nature is proved to us on all hands in his poems, and his sensitiveness of feeling is well shown in the "Lines written above Tintern Abbey." But to get the utmost good possible, he tells us a further process is necessary, a withdrawal into oneself and an inward contemplation of what one has seen and felt. It is the picture left on the mind after this process which is the last lesson Nature can give us, and which is the fit subject of poetry. Often the emotion originally excited will be completely transmuted in this process of inward reflection: sadness may be made the substance of a higher joy.' Thus Nature in Wordsworth's poetry is not regarded as a mere background for his pictures of man, nor as a mirror reflecting the feelings of man, but rather as a wonderful power around us calming and influencing our souls.

Wordsworth's best poetry was written between the years 1797 and 1808; the best of his best is supreme in its kind. It is intermingled with a good deal that, whether or not as a consequence of his theories, is comparatively of very poor quality. Sometimes the two qualities are most strangely blended in the same poem, as in 'The Sailor's Mother' (below). As a sonneteer his merits are very remarkable. That the poet who could write such drivel as

'And Betty's most especial charge
Was, "Johnny! Johnny! mind that you

Come home again, nor stop at all,
Come home again, whate'er befall,
My Johnny do, I pray you do"'

in the 'Idiot Boy,' should be the one to bring the sonnet back to its pristine perfection and to popular favour, is one of those things one would never be likely to prophesy. Yet the best sonnets of Wordsworth are worthy of Shakespeare or Milton, unsurpassable, perfect, equaled only by 'Let me not to the marriage of true minds' (see p. 67) and its few compeers. That the poet of the 'Idiot Boy' found the discipline of sonnet-writing beneficial is not to be wondered at; as he himself says,

'In truth the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground.'

To our earlier illustration we add here his finest sonnet, and 'The Sailor's Mother.'

'The world is too much with us, late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God, I'd rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.'

'One morning (raw it was and wet—
A foggy day in winter time)
A Woman on the road I met,
Not old, though something past her prime:
Majestic in her person, tall and straight;
And like a Roman matron's was her mien and gait.

The ancient spirit is not dead,
Old times, thought I, are breathing there;
Proud was I that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair:

She begged an alms, like one in poor estate;
I looked at her again, nor did my pride abate.

When from these lofty thoughts I woke,
"What is it," said I, "that you bear,
Beneath the covert of your Cloak,
Protected from this cold damp air?"
She answered, soon as she the question heard,
"A simple burthen, Sir, a little Singing-bird."

And, thus continuing, she said,
"I had a Son, who many a day
Sailed on the seas, but he is dead,
In Denmark he was cast away:
And I have travelled weary miles to see
If aught which he had owned might still remain for me.

"The bird and cage they both were his:
'Twas my Son's bird; and neat and trim
He kept it: many voyages
The singing-bird had gone with him;
When last he sailed, he left the bird behind;
From bodings, as might be, that hung upon his mind.

"He to a fellow-lodger's care
Had left it, to be watched and fed,
And pipe its song in safety;—there
I found it when my Son was dead;
And now, God help me for my little wit!
I bear it with me, Sir;—he took so much delight in it."'

Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 1772-1834

But little must be added here to what has been said of Coleridge above. His part in the 'Lyrical Ballads' was to obtain a 'willing suspension of disbelief' for the supernatural, and we may say that that is what the best of his poetry does. His years of full poetic inspiration were few, two at the most (1797-1798), and hence the quantity of his high poetic work is in inverse proportion to its quality. He waited weary years in the vain hope of a return of inspiration, in order to finish 'Christabel'; but it was never finished. His later work was critical and philosophical. 'Coleridge alone among English writers is in the front rank at once as poet, as critic, and as philosopher.' His 'Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare' is still one of the very few indispensable books for the Shakespearean student.

His poetry.

The poetry of Coleridge has 'a certain languidly soothing grace or cadence for its most fixed quality.' He pointed out to Hazlitt that there is a 'class of poetry built on the foundation of dreams.' In such poetry he is *facile princeps* in universal literature. 'The Ancient Mariner,' 'Christabel' (1816), 'Kubla Khan,' and 'Love' may be called 'dream poems.' 'Kubla Khan' was actually a dream; it is a fragment because he was interrupted in transcribing it by an unspeakable caller. If, in addition to these four, 'Dejection' and 'France' are read, the student will acknowledge the peculiar charm of Coleridge's magic verse. There is no more luscious music, no more enchanting melody, in the English tongue than are to be found in these six pieces. Hazlitt says that Coleridge 'liked to compose in walking over uneven ground, or breaking through the straggling branches of a copse-wood'; but the mode of composition left no trace in his verse, unless it be in the accentual rhythm. 'The metre of the "Christabel,"' says the Preface, 'is not, properly speaking, irregular, though it may seem so from its being founded on a new principle: namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve, yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four.' Coleridge was unaware that his 'new principle' is that upon which the oldest English verse is constructed. So were his brother poets, and they seized upon it with delight. While the incomplete poem was fluttering about the literary circles in manuscript, Scott heard it recited by Sir John Stoddart in 1801, and 'the music in his heart he bore,' reproducing it as best he could in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' (1805), whence Byron borrowed it for his 'Siege of Corinth'

The peculiar witchery of Coleridge's poetry can hardly be better exemplified than in the 'Kubla Khan' fragment

'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round:
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

. .

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:
And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean.
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingling measure
From the fountain and the caves
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!
A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid,
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight 'twould win me
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there.
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread,
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.'

Byron and Shelley, an admirable contrast and representing opposite extremes of Romantic poetry, will complete our account of early nineteenth century verse. If the criticism of foreign nations be, as Madame de Stael says, that of a contemporary posterity, Byron might be the first of English poets, for he had an enormous reputation abroad. In his hands English poetry became for the first time European.

Lord Byron, 1788-1824.

'He touched his harp, and nations heard, entranced,
As some vast river of unfailing source,
Rapid, exhaustless, deep, his numbers flowed,
And opened new fountains in the human heart.
Where fancy halted, weary in her flight,
In other men, his, fresh as morning, rose,
And soared untrodden heights, and seemed at home
Where angels bashful looked. Others, though great,
Beneath their argument seemed struggling whiles,
He, from above descending, stooped to touch
The loftiest thought; and proudly stooped as though
It scarce deserved his verse. With Nature's self
He seemed an old acquaintance, free to jest
At will with all her glorious majesty.
He laid his hand upon the "Ocean's mane,"
And played familiar with his hoary locks;
Stood on the Alps, stood on the Apennines,
And with the thunder talked, as friend to friend;
And wove his garland of the lightning's wing.'

This is the way Byron's contemporaries write of him. His personality and his poetry together 'subjugated' them, and oppressed their judgment. His finest verse is by no means always wholesome[1]: it includes parts of 'Childe Harold,' one or two of the 'Hebrew Melodies,' 'Beppo,' 'The Vision of Judgment,' and parts of 'Don Juan.' It was 'Childe Harold' that first took the world, not England alone, by storm, and the reason is not far to seek. Europe was in the last deadly throes of the struggle

[1] Most of what is at once good and wholesome is collected in the Golden Treasury 'Byron.' (Macmillan, 2s. 6d.)

with Napoleon, and Byron alone among the poets of that day took what filled the thoughts of every one for the themes of his muse. 'There was not a parish of Great Britain in which there was not some household that had a direct personal interest in the scene of the pilgrim's travels—"some friend, some brother there." . . . Loose and rambling as "Childe Harold" is, it yet had for the time an unconscious art; it entered the absorbing tumult of a hot and feverish struggle, and opened a way in the dark clouds gathering over the combatants through which they could see the blue vault and the shining stars.' But Byron was essentially an occasional poet, and his fame now rests rather on the most brilliant passages in the whole of his poetry than on any particular poems. His life is in his work; and, on the whole, the more personal parts of his writing are the best. The mass, the range, the rush, the force, the versatility of his productions are well nigh incredible; but they have the defects of their qualities, and on the artistic side, in form, versification, structure, execution, are often lamentably weak. We are too often struck by Byron's 'elemental worldliness.' Boundless resources he has of invention, rhetoric, passion, wit and fancy; but he lacks the highest mark of the 'maker,' supreme imagination.

The following stanzas from 'Don Juan' are refreshingly unorthodox.

'Milton's the prince of poets—so we say;
  A little heavy, but no less divine:
An independent being in his day—
  Learn'd, pious, temperate in love and wine;
But his life falling into Johnson's way,
  We're told this great high priest of all the Nine
Was whipt at college—a harsh sire—odd spouse,
  For the first Mrs. Milton left his house.

All these are, *certes*, entertaining facts,
  Like Shakespeare's stealing deer, Lord Bacon's bribes,
Like Titus' youth, and Caesar's earliest acts,
  Like Burns (whom Doctor Currie well describes),
Like Cromwell's pranks,—but although truth exacts
  These amiable descriptions from the scribes,
As most essential to their hero's story,
They do not much contribute to his glory.

All are not moralists, like Southey, when
He prated to the world of "Pantisocrasy;"
Or Wordsworth unexcised, unhired, who then
Season'd his pedlar poems with democracy,
Or Coleridge, long before his flighty pen
Let to the Morning Post its aristocracy,
When he and Southey, following the same path,
Espoused two partners (milliners of Bath).

Such names at present cut a convict figure,
The very Botany Bay in moral geography;
Their loyal treason, renegado rigour,
Are good manure for their more bare biography.
Wordsworth's last quarto, by the way, is bigger
Than any since the birthday of typography,
A drowsy frowsy poem, call'd the "Excursion,"
Writ in a manner which is my aversion.

He there builds up a formidable dyke
Between his own and others' intellect,
But Wordsworth's poem, and his followers, like
Joanna Southcote's Shiloh, and her sect,
Are things which in this century don't strike
The public mind—so few are the elect,
And the new births of both their stale virginities
Have proved but dropsies, taken for divinities . . . .

We learn from Horace, "Homer sometimes sleeps",
We feel without him, Wordsworth sometimes wakes,—
To show with what complacency he creeps,
With his dear "Waggoners," around his lakes.
He wishes for "a boat" to sail the deeps—
Of ocean?—No, of air, and then he makes
Another outcry for "a little boat,"
And drivels seas to set it well afloat

If he must fain sweep o'er the ethereal plain,
And Pegasus runs restive in his "Waggon,"
Could he not beg the loan of Charles's Wain?
Or pray Medea for a single dragon!
Or if too classic for his vulgar brain,
He fear'd his neck to venture such a nag on,
And he must needs mount nearer to the moon,
Could not the blockhead ask for a balloon?

"Pedlars," and "Boats," and "Waggons!" Oh! ye shades
Of Pope and Dryden, are we come to this?
That trash of such sort not alone evades
Contempt, but from the bathos' vast abyss

Floats scumlike uppermost, and these Jack Cades
  Of sense and song above your graves may hiss!—
The "little boatman," and his "Peter Bell,"
  Can sneer at him who drew "Achitophel!" . . . . .

John Keats, who was kill'd off by one critique,
  Just as he really promised something great,
If not intelligible, without Greek
  Contrived to talk about the gods of late
Much as they might have been supposed to speak
  Poor fellow! His was an untoward fate,
'Tis strange the mind, that very fiery particle,
  Should let itself be snuff'd out by an article'

Percy Bysshe Shelley, 1792-1822

Shelley seems, on a superficial examination, to have nothing in common with his friend Byron. Yet they were both aristocrats; both were opponents of the established order in the state and in society, who made the Continent rather than England their home; both wrote in haste and did not correct at leisure; and both looked upon Greece as the historic land of freedom, "the mother of the free." But it is not to be wondered at if these points of contact are lost sight of in the vast differences that sunder them. In Byron the intellect is supreme, and the imagination subordinate; in Shelley the intellect is the servant of the imagination. Byron is of the world, worldly; too often of the earth, earthy; whereas of Shelley it has been said with truth: 'None of his contemporaries lived from first to last so completely under the dominance of "soul-light"; his errors in conduct and weaknesses in art were alike rooted in this supreme quality.' Byron is a materialist, Shelley an idealist. With eyes fixed on the splendid apparitions with which he peopled space, he went through the world not seeing the high road, stumbling over the stones by the roadside.

Of Shelley's longer works the most perfect are: the two lyric dramas on the Greek model, 'Prometheus Unbound' and 'Hellas'; 'Adonais'—also on the model of the Greek laments of Bion and Moschus—an elegy on the death of Keats worthy to rank with 'Lycidas' and 'In Memoriam'; the 'Witch of Atlas' and 'Epipsychidion. But Shelley is nowhere greater than in his numerous

shorter lyrical pieces, among the best of which are 'The Skylark' (quoted below), 'The Cloud,' 'To Constantia Singing,' 'Ode to the West Wind,' 'Rarely, rarely, comest Thou,' 'The Ode to Liberty,' and 'To Night.' It has been well said that 'as a poet Shelley contributed a new quality to English literature—a quality of ideality, freedom, and spiritual audacity, which severe critics of other nations think we lack.' He is the poet of the glorious future, possessed by a vision of intellectual beauty. If for the satisfaction of the senses we turn to the poetry of Byron, if our heart turns to Keats, and our soul to Wordsworth, it is for the satisfaction of the spirit that we turn to Shelley. If he lived in an unpractical ethereal world, his poetry is drawing many souls upwards to hold communion with him there.

'Hail to thee, blithe spirit—
Bird thou never wert—
That from heaven or near it
Pourest thy full heart
In profuse strains of unpremeditated art.

Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest
Like a cloud of fire,
The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and soaring ever singest.

In the golden lightning
Of the sunken sun,
O'er which clouds are bright'ning,
Thou dost float and run,
Like an unbodied joy whose race is just begun.

The pale purple even
Melts around thy flight;
Like a star of heaven,
In the broad daylight
Thou art unseen, but yet I hear thy shrill delight,

Keen as are the arrows
Of that silver sphere
Whose intense lamp narrows
In the white dawn clear,
Until we hardly see, we feel, that it is there.

All the earth and air
  With thy voice is loud,
As, when night is bare,
  From one lonely cloud
The moon rains out her beams, and heaven is overflowed.

What thou art we know not;
  What is most like thee?
From rainbow clouds there flow not
  Drops so bright to see
As from thy presence showers a rain of melody.

Like a poet hidden
  In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden,
  Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not:

Like a high-born maiden
  In a palace tower,
Soothing her love-laden
  Soul in secret hour
With music sweet as love which overflows her bower:

Like a glow-worm golden
  In a dell of dew,
Scattering unbeholden
  Its aerial hue
Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view:

Like a rose embowered
  In its own green leaves,
By warm winds deflowered,
  Till the scent it gives
Makes faint with too much sweet these heavy-wingèd thieves:

Sound of vernal showers
  On the twinkling grass,
Rain-awakened flowers,
  All that ever was
Joyous and clear and fresh, thy music doth surpass:

Teach us, sprite or bird,
  What sweet thoughts are thine
I have never heard
  Praise of love or wine
That panted forth a flood of rapture so divine.

Chorus hymeneal
  Or triumphal chaunt,
Matched with thine would be all
  But an empty vaunt,
A thing wherein we feel there is some hidden want.

What objects are the fountains
  Of thy happy strain?
What fields, or waves, or mountains?
  What shapes of sky or plain?
What love of thine own kind? what ignorance of pain?

With thy clear keen joyance
  Languor cannot be.
Shadow of annoyance
  Never came near thee.
Thou lovest; but ne'er knew love's sad satiety.

Waking or asleep,
  Thou of death must deem
Things more true and deep
  Than we mortals dream,
Or how could thy notes flow in such a crystal stream?

We look before and after,
  And pine for what is not:
Our sincerest laughter
  With some pain is fraught;
Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought.

Yet, if we could scorn
  Hate and pride and fear,
If we were things born
  Not to shed a tear,
I know not how thy joy we ever should come near

Better than all measures
  Of delightful sound,
Better than all treasures
  That in books are found,
Thy skill to poet were, thou scorner of the ground!

Teach me half the gladness
  That thy brain must know,
Such harmonious madness
  From my lips would flow,
The world should listen then as I am listening now.'

Keats (like Shelley's ashes) lies in the Protestant cemetery at Rome, and on his grave, by his own desire, is the inscription: "Here lies one whose name was writ in water." "Posterity has agreed with him that it is," adds Saintsbury, "but in the Water of Life" Keats' father was employed in livery stables in London, and the boy was bred as a surgeon, but gave up his studies in the year that his first volume of "Poems" (1817) appeared. In 1818 came "Endymion," insolently reviewed in the *Quarterly*, and also in *Blackwood*, which called it "calm, settled, imperturbable, drivelling idiocy." Not these reviews, as Shelley supposed, but consumption led to the poet's early death. In a volume of 1820 all his most perfect work appeared. In the fall of that year he sailed for Naples with his friend Severn, who tended him with a woman's devotion until his death at Rome in February 1821. In view of popular misconceptions, it may be well to add that his character was essentially sane, generous, and manly.

Keats, 1795-1821.

What might not this genius of twenty-five have accomplished if he had lived? His mind ripened early, and his work shows an extraordinary advance in both creative and critical power. "Endymion," in which Endymion's pursuit of Diana typifies the poet's pursuit of beauty, is weak, diffuse, and full of mere "prettinesses" of diction "Lamia," the tale of a youth who marries a serpent in the guise of a beautiful woman, and "Isabella, or the Pot of Basil," show the growth of human feeling and artistic restraint. "Hyperion," a Greek fragment, is a triumph of Miltonic severity In the "Eve of St Agnes," and still more in the six great Odes and the pick of the Sonnets, Keats reaches the height and ideal of his art, and founds the Tennysonian school of flawless workmanship which was to influence much of the best verse of the nineteenth century.

Keats once wrote, "I have loved the principle of beauty in all things" This principle came to him through three main channels through external Nature, which he paints with Shakespearean felicity; through the luxuriant richness of thought seen in Elizabethan poets and playwrights; and through the severe grandeur of Greek art. If judged

by quantity, he cannot claim a position in the first rank, though no other poet would stand higher if he had died at twenty-five; but if judged by quality Keats must rank with the greatest moulders and creators of verse. The essential mark of his genius is that he unites the ideals of old Greece and modern Romanticism. His poetic faith is summed up in the close of the "Ode on a Grecian Urn," of which we quote the first and last two stanzas.—

Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness!
  Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
  A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme:
What leaf-fringed legend haunts about thy shape
  Of deities or mortals, or of both,
    In Tempe or the dales of Arcady?
  What men or gods are these? What maidens loth?
What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?
    What pipes and timbrels? What wild ecstasy?

* * * * * * *

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
  To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
Lead'st thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
  And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
What little town by river or sea-shore,
  Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
    Is emptied of its folk, this pious morn?
And, little town, thy streets for evermore
  Will silent be: and not a soul to tell
    Why thou are desolate, can e'er return.

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
  Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
  Thou, silent form! dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
  When old age shall this generation waste,
    Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
  Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty."—That is all
    Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

Scott and his predecessors

The second great period of English fiction opened with Scott's 'Waverley' in 1814 and closed with his death in 1832. Scott says with reference to his immediate predecessors in fiction: 'The imitators of Mrs. Radcliffe and Mr. Lewis were before us; personages who, to all the faults and extravagances of their originals, added that of dulness, with which they can seldom be charged. We strolled through a variety of castles, each of which was regularly called Il Castello; met with as many captains of condottieri; heard various ejaculations of S. Maria and Diabolo; read by a decaying lamp and in a tapestried chamber dozens of legends as stupid as the main history; examined such suites of deserted apartments as might fit up a reasonable barrack; and saw as many glimmering lights as would make a respectable illumination.' But, besides these, there were two ladies in the early years of the century, Miss Porter, authoress of the 'Scottish Chiefs' (1810), and Miss Edgeworth, the foundress of the novel of Irish life and character, who if they did nothing more, pointed out to Scott, as he most generously acknowledges, the two main lines that his fiction was to follow, those of history and Scottish character Yet the most superficial comparison of Scott with these or any predecessors will show that he is rightly esteemed the creator of the historical novel, because he was the first to respect the truth of history, to convey on the whole sufficiently accurate impressions of historical events and of the social life of past ages, while combining with these in one narrative fictitious characters and incidents. In one word, the historical novel in his hands became a genuine work of literary art, and the conditions which he imposed upon it were accepted as the canons of that class of composition. Where, in later works, a greater degree of historical accuracy has been attained, the result has usually been less pleasing, less artistic, less successful as literature and as fiction. 'In speed of production, combined with variety and depth of interest, and weight and accuracy of historical substance, Scott is still unrivalled.'

Scott's life was prosperous and happy until the downfall

of the Constables and the Ballantynes, his publishers and printers, in 1826, a crash which involved him in liabilities amounting to £117,000. His attempt at the age of fifty-five to wipe off this debt is one of the most heroic stories in literary history. In five years he had repaid £63,000, but the effort killed him. When in 1831 he went for a voyage in a vessel placed at his disposal by the King, Wordsworth wrote:

Sir Walter Scott, 1771-1832

> 'The might
> Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes,
> Blessings and prayers, in nobler retinue
> Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows,
> Follow this wondrous Potentate.'

He returned in time to die at Abbotsford.

The 'Waverley Novels'

It is often supposed that the 'Border Minstrel' was a poet by birth and a novelist by accident, whereas we have his own account to prove that it was by a series of accidents he had been led to write his earlier romances in verse, instead of in prose. As he humorously says, 'those who complain, not unreasonably, of the profusion of the tales which have followed "Waverley," may bless their stars at the narrow escape they have made, by the commencement of the inundation being postponed fifteen years.' The second title of 'Waverley' was originally (in 1805) 'Or 'tis Fifty years since'; but Scott mislaid the manuscript, and did not find it till 1814, when he changed the 'Fifty' to 'Sixty.' All this proves conclusively that he did not take to prose fiction *because*, as he put it, Byron had 'bet him' in poetry. 'Waverley,' introduced to the world anonymously, gave its name to the wonderful series of twenty-nine works produced in the next seventeen years (1814-31), during thirteen of which the secret of the authorship was kept. Of the twenty-nine, seventeen may be called historical; and of these again, 'Waverley' and six others deal with Scottish history, 'Ivanhoe' and six others with English history, and 'Quentin Durward' and two others with continental history. They range in time from the twelfth to the eighteenth century.

The 'Waverley Novels' owe their exalted position to two pre-eminent qualities: the excellence of the characterisation, and the harmonious development of the plots. Scott was the first to show how much the mingling of invention with historical truth can effect, when each completes and interpenetrates the other, and how much the novel may gain by the combination. This may have been at first the result of a happy chance, but even then it was a stroke of genius. Extravagant critics have placed Scott on a level with Shakespeare, as if they could be compared in depth of feeling and in creative originality; but one thing at least they had in common and in equal measure—healthiness of spirit and, consequently, dislike of all artificiality. All Scott's characters are genuinely drawn from life; they are real men and women, *not* personifications or abstractions or attempts at the solution of psychological problems masquerading in human garb The historical personages, that pass before us in his pages, represent the most diverse classes and peoples,—Richard the Lion-heart and Louis XI., Cromwell and Charles the Bold, Rob Roy, Rochester, and Montrose, Cavaliers and Roundheads, pirates and astrologers, court-ladies and fortune-tellers; yet all appear real and natural, and accord so well with their surroundings, their time, and with historical tradition, that the mind of the reader is satisfied with what he feels to be, on the one hand a work of art, and on the other the essential truth of history. The clearness of the total impression is secured by the harmonious grouping of the characters and by the due subordination of all parts to the main action. Moreover, Scott, like Shakespeare, does not generalise from the individual, but individualises the class, and thus renders his portraits, as every great artist must, true types of character. Herein lie at once the high moral value and the high artistic value of his fictions. Not one of them is a moral problem, excogitated in order to prove the truth of a favourite theory; but all the teachings of life and experience are there, as in life itself, without one of them being dragged into undue prominence.

To what their pre-eminence is due

On one side Scott's genius is in kinship with Wordsworth's—in the beauty and correctness of his descriptions, which are always in strict unison with the 'situation' in which they are introduced. The smallest details are handled with the same certainty of touch as the main outlines; hence the whole picture never fails to induce in the reader the same feeling that nature awakens in the observer (only in a different degree), whether it be the solemn stillness of old towns and dark forests, or the soft and yet majestic stillness of a lake in the Highlands. His descriptions are both rich and accurate; his outlines are sharp and clear; his landscapes have always their characteristic 'tone.' He gives, as Wordsworth does, at once the form and the spirit of the place, but with this difference, that the poet necessarily relies more upon suggestion.

To all these excellences must be added the variety of his characters and situations, his rich multifarious knowledge, and his historical fairness. However decided Scott's political faith was, and however it led him in his other works to crude and one-sided judgments, it had not the slightest influence on the handling of his fictional material; he never alters a historical character out of love for his own views, or assigns to one a fixed tendency subservient to other than literary ends. Characters and circumstances so completely determine the development of each story, that the reader gives himself up to that delusion without which the highest delights and effects of fiction are impossible, and follows the adventures of real men and women.

Before parting with the 'Wizard of the North' it may be useful to give an extract from one of his novels. We select for this purpose 'A Legend of Montrose' (1819), a tale of the Civil War in the seventeenth century and one of the most spirited of the Scottish romances

'"And the Marquis of Argyle—should I incline to enter his service, is he a kind master?" demanded Dalgetty.

"Never man kinder," quoth Campbell.

"And bountiful to his officers?" pursued the Captain.

"The most open hand in Scotland," replied Murdoch.

"True and faithful to his engagements?" continued Dalgetty.

"As honourable a nobleman as breathes," said the clansman.

"I never heard so much good of him before," said Dalgetty, "you must know the Marquis well—or rather you must be the Marquis himself! Lord of Argyle," he added, throwing himself suddenly on the disguised nobleman, "I arrest you in the name of King Charles, as a traitor. If you venture to call for assistance, I will wrench round your neck."

The attack which Dalgetty made upon Argyle's person was so sudden and unexpected that he easily prostrated him on the floor of the dungeon, and held him down with one hand, while his right, grasping the Marquis's throat, was ready to strangle him on the slightest attempt to call for assistance.

"Lord of Argyle," he said, "it is now my turn to lay down the terms of capitulation. If you list to show me the private way by which you entered the dungeon, you shall escape, on condition of being my *locum tenens*, as we said at the Mareschal College, until your warder visits his prisoners. But if not, I will first strangle you—I learned the art from a Polonian heyduck, who had been a slave in the Ottoman seraglio—and then seek out a mode of retreat."

"Villain! you would not murder me for my kindness," murmured Argyle.

"Not for your kindness, my lord," replied Dalgetty; "but first to teach your lordship the *jus gentium* towards cavaliers who come to you under safe-conduct, and secondly, to warn you of the danger of proposing dishonourable terms to any worthy soldado, in order to tempt him to become false to his standard during the term of his service."

"Spare my life," said Argyle, "and I will do as you require."

Dalgetty maintained his gripe upon the Marquis's throat, compressing it a little while he asked questions, and relaxing it so far as to give him the power of answering them.

"Where is the secret door into the dungeon?" he demanded.

"Hold up the lantern to the corner on your right hand, you will discern the iron which covers the spring," replied the Marquis.

"So far so good. Where does the passage lead to?"

"To my private apartment behind the tapestry," anwered the prostrate nobleman.

"From thence how shall I reach the gateway?"

"Through the grand gallery, the ante-room, the lackey's waiting hall, the grand guardroom—"

"All crowded with soldiers, factionaries, and attendants?—that

will never do for me, my lord, have you no secret passage to the gate, as you have to your dungeons? I have seen such in Germany."

"There is a passage through the chapel," said the Marquis, "opening from my apartment."

"And what is the pass-word at the gate?"

"The sword of Levi," replied the Marquis; "but if you will receive my pledge of honour, I will go with you, escort you through every guard, and set you at full liberty with a passport."

"I might trust you, my lord, were your throat not already black with the grasp of my fingers, as it is, *beso los manos a usted*, as the Spaniard says. Yet you may grant me a passport—are there writing materials in your apartment?"

"Surely; and blank passports ready to be signed. I will attend you there," said the Marquis, "instantly."

"It were too much honour for the like of me," said Dalgetty, "your lordship shall remain under charge of mine honest friend Ranald MacEagh, therefore, prithee let me drag you within reach of his chain. Honest Ranald, you see how matters stand with us. I shall find the means, I doubt not, of setting you at freedom. Meantime, do as you see me do, clap your hand thus on the weasand of this high and mighty prince, under his ruff, and if he offer to struggle or cry out, fail not, my worthy Ranald, to squeeze doughtily, and if it be *ad deliquium*, Ranald, that is, till he swoon, there is no great matter, seeing he designed your gullet and mine to still harder usage."

"If he offer at speech or struggle," said Ranald, "he dies by my hand."

"That is right, Ranald—very spirited, a thorough-going friend that understands a hint is worth a million!"

Thus resigning the charge of the Marquis to his new confederate, Dalgetty pressed the spring, by which the secret door flew open, though so well were its hinges polished and oiled that it made not the slightest noise in revolving. The opposite side of the door was secured by very strong bolts and bars, beside which hung one or two keys, designed apparently to undo fetterlocks. A narrow staircase, ascending up through the thickness of the castle-wall, landed, as the Marquis had truly informed him, behind the tapestry of his private apartment. Such communications were frequent in old feudal castles, as they gave the lord of the fortress, like a second Dionysius, the means of hearing the conversation of his prisoners, or, if he pleased, of visiting them in disguise, an experiment which had terminated so unpleasantly on the present occasion for Gillespie Grumach.

Having examined previously whether there was anyone in the apartment, and finding the coast clear, the Captain entered, and hastily possessing himself of a blank passport, several of which lay on the table, and of writing materials, securing, at the same time, the Marquis's dagger and a silk cord from the hangings, he again descended into the cavern, where, listening a moment at the door, he could hear the half-stifled voice of the Marquis making great proffers to MacEagh, on condition he would suffer him to give an alarm

"Not for a forest of deer—not for a thousand head of cattle," answered the freebooter, "not for all the lands that ever called a son of Diarmid master, will I break the troth I have plighted to him of the iron garment!"

"He of the iron garment," said Dalgetty, entering, "is bounden unto you, MacEagh, and this noble lord shall be bounden also, but first he must fill up this passport with the names of Major Dugald Dalgetty and his guide, or he is like to have a passport to another world"

The Marquis subscribed and wrote, by the light of the dark lantern, as the soldier prescribed to him.'

Charles Lamb, 1775-1834

No one could desire a happier omen than to close his book with the name of Charles Lamb, one of the most lovable men that ever lived, 'my gentle-hearted Charles,' 'Lamb the frolic and the gentle.' Yet in one respect his life was a prolonged tragedy. When his sister Mary, his collaborator in the 'Tales from Shakespeare,' killed their invalid mother in a moment of maniacal frenzy, her brother gave up all thoughts of marriage, and devoted the remainder of his life to a companionship unique in the history of English letters, one from which the element of pathos was never absent, and that of tragedy seldom.

In literary criticism Lamb is the peer of Coleridge and Hazlitt; and to their acumen and insight he added a sympathy, a reverence and a subtle charm of style, to which they cannot lay equal claim. 'The *spirit* of his author descended upon him, and he felt it!' His 'Essays of Elia,' contributed to the 'London Magazine,' are among the daintiest things in the whole range of our literature. No fine old crusted port can equal

them in flavour. They were archaic when they were written, and yet their old-world air was as natural and native to Lamb as if he had been a resurrected Elizabethan. For combined humour, taste, penetration, and vivacity they are unsurpassed, perhaps unequaled. Lamb's theme is London, which he knew and loved so well; he is her great prose-poet. In whatever he wrote he is always the same Lamb, humour and pathos and love commingled, so that we cannot wonder that Wordsworth wrote, in his noble tribute 'Written after the Death of Charles Lamb,'

'Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived!'

MRS. BATTLE'S OPINIONS ON WHIST.

'"A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigour of the game." This was the celebrated *wish* of old Sarah Battle (now with God), who, next to her devotions, loved a good game of whist. She was none of your luke-warm gamesters, your half-and-half players, who have no objection to take a hand, if you want one to make a rubber, who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game and lose another, that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card-table, but are indifferent whether they play or no; and will desire an adversary who has slipped a wrong card to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing them.

Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul, and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took and gave no concessions. She hated favours She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight, cut and thrust. She held not her good sword (her cards) "like a dancer" She sat bolt upright, and never showed you her cards nor desired to see yours. All people have their blind side—their superstitions, and I have heard her declare, under the rose, that hearts was her favourite suit

I never in my life—and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it—saw her take out her snuff-box when it was her turn to play, or snuff a candle in the middle of a game, or ring for a servant till it

was fairly over. She never introduced or connived at miscellaneous conversation during its process As she emphatically observed, cards were cards, and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last-century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand, and who, in his excess of candour, declared that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing she came into the world to do,—and she did it. She unbent her mind afterwards over a book.'

CHAPTER X.

THE AGE OF TENNYSON.

The Age of Tennyson, 1832-1892.

THE Age of Wordsworth opened with the publication of "Lyrical Ballads." The beginning of the next period of English literature was marked by nothing so revolutionary. It may be said to begin with the publication of Tennyson's "Poems" in 1830; its most fruitful years were the years of his prime, and it closed about the year of his death, 1892. Within these dates a great epoch expressed itself in a great literature, whose unity of spirit, in spite of the variety of its form, becomes more and more evident as the period recedes from us. It is fitting that the age should take its name from Tennyson, not on account of the happy accident of his Laureateship, but because its limits coincide with the limits of his working life, and because he is the most representative writer of his time. His interests are the highest interests of the age; he felt the difficulties, and voiced the hopes of its finest spirits.

Its Characteristics. (1) great material progress.

What were the characteristics of this epoch? The first and most obvious is that it was an era of enormous material progress. In these sixty years the population of England doubled; its wealth increased three or four-fold. The effects of the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century worked themselves out, and altered the whole structure of society. The relations of class with class were changed. The established social order, which to the writers of the eighteenth century had seemed a thing fixed and unalterable, was proved to be a temporary and transient arrangement. A revolutionary feeling was abroad in the early part of the period, and showed itself in much of the literature. But it disappeared with the increase of wealth and comfort. New methods of industry afforded unprecedented opportunities of becoming rich. The discoveries of science knit

the whole world closer together and widened enormously the field of an energetic man's opportunities. "The application of science to industry," "the conquest of the material resources of nature" were the watchwords of the time and the achievements of which the age was proudest. These things seemed to the men of the day to be not merely greater than the achievements of any previous age, but so great as to constitute a new beginning, a new and real civilisation: the seventeenth century achieved parliamentary liberty, but it had no railways, the Elizabethans were great, but knew not the electric cable

(ii) Commercialism

Hence the chief energies of the period were devoted to ends very different from art and literature. Its standards were those of the market, not those of the library. Its system of values had no place, or only a very low place, for beauty and truth of ideas In short it was an age of commercialism. To idealists its enormous energy and productive power seemed to be misdirected Material production was regarded not as a means to the good life, but as an end in itself, and apparently the chief end in life. An increase in comfort has often resulted in an outburst of literature and art There was such an outburst in the second quarter of the nineteenth century; but it is less a product of increased leisure and increased wealth than a protest against these.

(iii) Progress of the Natural Sciences and its results.

The age then was one of great achievement in the arts of wealth, and its prevailing spirit was one of materialism It was materialistic also in another sense, the philosophical sense. A scientific method was being developed which made the investigation of nature effective to an extent hitherto undreamed of. Man's conception of the material universe was changed. Darwin's application of the law of evolution to the sphere of biology changed man's conception of himself. The critical method of the natural sciences was extended to history and theology, and the fabric of authority found itself undermined on every side. The effects of all this criticism have not yet worked themselves out, but they very quickly made themselves

felt. Old views of the universe, of man and his relation to God, had to be given up. Old faiths had to restate themselves, or justify themselves on new grounds. The destructive effect of this criticism was increased by the folly or cowardice of the orthodox, who refused to face it and attempted to ignore the problems it raised. Hence the thoughtful layman found his old beliefs crumbling beneath his feet, and naturally turned for new ones to the sciences which had made them necessary. Of course Science (with a capital S, as the natural sciences came to be called) could not answer all his questions; but rationalistic theories became fashionable, which, basing themselves on Science, eliminated the supernatural from the universe and, perhaps unintentionally, justified the materialistic bent of society at that time. Finer spirits, whose honesty compelled them to give up traditional faiths—at any rate in the form they had received them—and who could not find any permanent satisfaction in a purely material conception of life and the universe, took refuge in agnosticism. Much was uncertain, but hope was left, or work, or the reality of passion, or the truth of art. Thus we get an age struggling to formulate a faith, giving utterance to partial and fragmentary beliefs, without wholly satisfying itself. But the doubts, the scepticism of the nineteenth century are not like those of the eighteenth. The scepticism of the eighteenth century was the scepticism of indifference; the nineteenth century writers were never indifferent. They have none of the smug satisfaction with the ideals of their time which shines through the rhetoric of Pope and his friends. With one or two exceptions they aim at expressing a wider and higher conception of life than that of the Great Exhibition of 1851; and it was in that Exhibition that the English of 1851 regarded their greatness as established.

Agnosticism.

What is the attitude of the great writers to this materialism in conduct, and formalism or scepticism in religion? They feel the exhilaration of living in a time of rapid progress; but few of them can enjoy it without criticism. In nearly all the literature of the time there is a note of revolt against

Characteristics of the Literature of the Age:

the deification of material progress. In Carlyle it is perhaps the dominant note. Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry as "a criticism of life" is applicable, if at all, to the poetry of his own time. The revolt is explicit in Tennyson's 'Maud' and 'Locksley Hall,' in Carlyle, Ruskin, and Arnold, in most of the novelists. It is implicit in art's whole treatment of contemporary life Bulstrode and Becky Sharp, Pecksniff and Jane Eyre's guardian are mirrors held up to their readers, and exhibit most unflattering reflections. The poets turned to other ages for inspiration. Nothing is more characteristic than the living interest they took in other times. As in every literary revival the classical myths received a new life, and without sacrificing any of their old beauty expressed new meanings. Perhaps Tennyson's finest work is to be found in his classical poems Matthew Arnold lived in habitual converse with the Greeks, and derived his art and ideas from them more than from any English source Swinburne succeeded, where Arnold failed, in making readable a tragedy written in English after the Greek model. Browning's chief field of interest was the Renaissance. Its persons live in his poems with an intensity possessed by few contemporaries But the chief historical interest of the time was in the Middle Ages, and the chief expression of this interest was, perhaps, the Oxford Movement

(i) Revolt against Materialism.

(ii) Revival of interest in past ages.

The Oxford movement was an attempt to recover a lost tradition. It was responsible for a good deal of spurious mediaevalism; but it did grasp the truth, which the eighteenth century had obscured, that the middle ages had qualities and capacities which the moderns had lost The theologians of the movement wished to recover the connexion with the Continent and with its own past which the English Church had lost at the Reformation They recognised in the mediaeval and early Church a habit of piety and a genius for public worship which had disappeared. They tried to restore these virtues by directing their own and other people's attention to the history of the middle ages, and by trying to recover the ritual and art of the mediaeval

The Oxford Movement

Church. The movement failed in its immediate object of altering the character of the English Church, partly because its most powerful leaders found themselves forced by the logic of their position to join the Church of Rome, and partly because its appeal to the authority of a Catholic tradition was not a sufficient defence of the Catholic creed against the attacks of scientific and historical criticism. But the movement exercised a great influence on the intellectual life of the time, and helped on a revival of interest in mediaeval art in which a whole school of poets and painters found their inspiration Just as Arnold found a refuge from the doubts and philistinism of his time in the Greek classics, so William Morris attached himself in spirit to the art and life of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Carlyle had used that time as a foil to the squalor and sordid motives of his own England Ruskin bade his contemporaries reach back for right standards and just motives of work past the intervening centuries to the time when the Gothic Cathedrals were built. Morris in all his various activities (and to a less extent Swinburne and Rossetti) tried to carry out this precept; he steeped himself in the art of the middle ages and tried in his own work to develop and continue the lines he found there, ignoring or combating the aims and tendencies of his own time.

(iii) Great Speculative Activity

Poets and prophets then found little in their own age but material for criticism and ideals to flee from But in their flight to other ages, in their denunciations of their country's commercialism, they were in search of the great need of the time —a new faith. The system of ideas

"On man, on Nature, and on human life,"

which are the foundation of the reasonable life and the eternal subjects of poetry, had been shaken to its base by the critical methods and discoveries of the new sciences. New truths had to be fitted into the system, and old truths restated. The attitude of the different writers to this problem varied; but the need of solution presents itself everywhere. The earlier writers were the most hopeful.

Browning and Dickens have an optimism, based on the mere joy of life, which no catastrophes of creeds can shake. But

> "God's in his Heaven
> All's right with the world,"

though encouraging and infectious, is rather a personal opinion than a reasoned explanation of the obvious ills in the world Tennyson is more explicit. In "In Memoriam" he states the problem presented to the religious (some years after) by Darwin, and attempts to solve it Is death the end? Is the evolution of this world a blind process without moral meaning? Has the distinction between right and wrong no absolute value? In any case, Why is right right? and, Is duty a delusion? These are the questions that recur in the most typical writers of the time Tennyson finally reaches a reasonable optimism. Where no other answer is possible he will assert

> "Because right is right to follow right
> Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence."

Arnold tends towards a reasonable pessimism. He cannot get rid of his doubts, and to perform the duty, the authority of which he recognises but fails to understand, he draws support from happier ages Others, as we have seen, turned their backs on the whole problem and attempted to construct the edifice of their life on the basis of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Others again, of the same school or closely connected with it, sought satisfaction in a refined hedonism. Life is there, and we must get what pleasure we can get out of it; and the chiefest pleasures are to be found in the practice and contemplation of art And through these at the end of the epoch we get people begging the whole question and preaching the barren doctrine of Art for Art's sake

Importance of Prose Fiction. In many epochs poetry is not merely the most important but the largest part of the literature of the time. In the epoch we are considering its preeminence is still undoubted, but is threatened. Historically perhaps prose fiction is the most important section

of Victorian literature. Poetry during the period is chiefly lyric and episodic in character There are few great constructional works. On the whole—there are of course important exceptions--poets did not set out to write epics or construct great dramas Their best work was in the realisation of separate characters, single episodes, isolated emotions There are relatively few works whose chief interest lies in the interrelations of a number of characters, and the interplay of their emotions. And this difference from Elizabethan or Jacobean poetry is perhaps explained by the importance of the novel The eighteenth century novelists were very far from exhausting the possibilities of the instrument they had invented Scott put it to a new use with enormous success. The Victorian novelists reverted to the treatment of contemporary life and manners.

The Novel as a Literary Form

The novel is perhaps the most elastic and adaptable medium that the literary artist has discovered. It requires dramatic construction, while allowing the author to work out his characters and incidents with a detail which makes the stage unnecessary It gives the humorist his opportunity, whether his humour lies mainly in his perception and creation of character, as with Dickens, or in his style, as with Thackeray The variety of treatment it permits gives the author scope for the fullest self-expression; and the variety of subject it treats is so great that the works of, for example, Dickens and Thackeray give us a more complete picture of the England of their time than we could have got in any other way. The only permanent rival of the novel is the drama; but the drama requires certain conditions which do not obtain in England. It requires, among other things, the concentration of the intellectual life of a nation in one place, as the life of France is concentrated in Paris, or that of England was in London in the times of Shakespeare, Congreve, and Sheridan. Moreover, the novel appeals to a wider audience than any other form of literature. Scott's popularity was perhaps equalled by Byron's; and Tennyson's poems had enormous sales. But since about 1860 the big audience has been for the novel and only the novel.

Rise of a class of uneducated readers

This wide appeal of prose fiction is significant of a tendency we must notice With the growth of the population and the diffusion of education we have had the growth of a reading public unlike any that existed before It is a public, enormous in number, able to read and often able to do little more, with a certain amount of leisure and the means of obtaining books. It has asked for something to read, and two great industries have grown up to satisfy that demand, the manufacture of popular fiction and popular journalism Hence it has become difficult for an author to satisfy his standards of literary taste and at the same time make a popular appeal. Dickens had virtues that appealed to all readers, and vices which strengthened his appeal to the reader without taste. But others have not been so fortunate; and we have the novel condition of a numerous class of readers who do not read the true literature of the time. To reach this class there has grown up a great mass of magazines and other serial publications which, with much that is purely ephemeral, contain a good deal of real literature. At the same time probably a larger proportion of the nation has a real interest in literature than ever before, and education tends to increase the proportion

We can best consider the literature of the period in three sections—Poetry, Prose Fiction, History and Criti-

I. Poetry.

The poetry of the age of Tennyson does not differ from that of Wordsworth's contemporaries as a result of any change of theory. There is a difference, but the difference is not fundamental as is that between Pope's poetry and Wordsworth's. Tennyson and his contemporaries recognised the authenticity of their immediate predecessors and were influenced by them. Especially is this influence noticeable in the debt of Tennyson to Keats and Arnold to Wordsworth No poet of the previous

generation, however, had such an influence on mid-Victorian literature as Tennyson himself.

Alfred Tennyson, 1809-1892.

Alfred Tennyson was one of three brothers, all poets, the sons of a rector of Somersby in Lincolnshire He was educated at Louth and Cambridge He was one of a set of brilliant undergraduates at Trinity; and it was one of these, Arthur Hallam, whose death led to the writing of 'In Memoriam' His first poems were published in 1830, another volume, 'Poems chiefly Lyrical,' appeared in 1832. He published nothing further till 1842. In the ten years interval Tennyson had not been idle. He had subjected his powers to a process of experiment and criticism, which enabled them to have their fullest possible effect. And the poetry of 1832 had been educating an audience for him. The 'Poems' of 1842, including as they did 'Ulysses,' 'Morte d'Arthur,' 'St. Agnes' Eve,' established his position as a great poet, and his later volumes only extended and made more profitable a popularity almost unequalled among poets of the first rank In 1847 came 'The Princess,' in 1850 'In Memoriam,' in 1855 'Maud,' in 1859 the first four 'Idylls of the King' The first of his dramas, 'Queen Mary,' appeared in 1875; the last volume published by himself, the volume containing 'Crossing the Bar,' in 1889.

The Early Poems.

Edward Fitzgerald maintained that Tennyson was never at his best after the volume of 1842. That opinion will obtain little support; but it is true that the earlier work was never excelled, and that the later poems discover hardly any powers which are not exhibited in this early work In the very earliest poems, while we see that the writer has used his predecessors in developing his own methods of expression, we hear the individual note of a new poet. He has an affinity with Keats, and in a less degree with Shelley, in the combination of perfectly musical language with a wonderful pictorial suggestiveness But the rhythm is new, and the imagery is beautiful in a different way from that of any other poet. In these early poems his greatness as a lyric poet is evident. His excellence lies in richness

of fancy, a sense of romance, and perfection of form, rather than in any depth of passion. We may quote for example some stanzas from 'Mariana':—

With blackest moss the flower-plots
Were thickly crusted, one and all:
The rusted nails fell from the knots
That held the peach to the garden-wall.
The broken sheds look'd sad and strange:
Unlifted was the clinking latch,
Weeded and worn the ancient thatch
Upon the lonely moated grange
She only said "My life is dreary,
He cometh not" she said,
She said "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

* * *

Upon the middle of the night,
Waking she heard the night-fowl crow:
The cock sung out an hour ere light
From the dark fen the oxen's low
Came to her; without hope of change,
In sleep she seem'd to walk forlorn,
Till cold winds woke the gray eyed morn
About the lonely moated grange
She only said "The day is dreary,
He cometh not" she said;
She said "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

* * *

And ever when the moon was low,
And the shrill winds were up and away,
In the white curtain, to and fro,
She saw the gusty shadow sway
But when the moon was very low,
And wild winds bound within their cell,
The shadow of the poplar fell
Upon her bed, across her brow.
She only said "The night is dreary,
He cometh not" she said,
She said "I am aweary, aweary,
I would that I were dead!"

* * *

The sparrow's chirrup on the roof,
The slow clock ticking, and the sound
Which to the wooing wind aloof

The poplar made, did all confound
Her sense; but most she loathed the hour
When the thick-moted sunbeam lay
Athwart the chambers, and the day
Was sloping toward his western bower.
Then, said she "I am very dreary,
He will not come," she said;
She wept, "I am aweary, aweary,
Oh God, that I were dead!"'

The Poems of 1842 revealed Tennyson's greatness as a writer of blank verse This medium had usually been reserved for the treatment of subjects on a large scale. Tennyson uses it to realise the simple episode or the single character. The 'Idyll,' to use his own title, is perhaps the most typical form into which he and his contemporaries throw their work In this form he is perfect. In a poem like 'St Simeon Stylites' he realises and expresses character far more effectively than in his plays In 'Ulysses,' 'Tithonus,' 'Oenone' there is a vivid presentation not so much of incidents themselves as of the atmosphere of incidents, in verse that is perhaps more than any other in the language 'most musical, most melancholy.' In all these poems and still more in the 'Morte d'Arthur' the poet manages to convey into the blank verse something of the quality of lyric poetry A few lines from 'Ulysses' may be quoted as an example of these poems.

'Death closes all; but something ere the end,
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,
Not unbecoming men that strove with Gods.
The lights begin to twinkle from the rocks,
The long day wanes the slow moon climbs: the deep
Moans round with many voices. Come, my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows, for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars, until I die'

The Longer Poems

After 1842 Tennyson became more ambitious in the scale of his work, and in three long poems set forth his views on contemporary questions of thought. The 'Princess' is dramatic in form and deals with the question of the equality of the sexes. The subject

is no longer novel; and Tennyson's style is not colloquial enough for the easy delineation of contemporary manners. The poem, however, contains some finely drawn characters and shows a greater versatility in the use of blank verse than any predecessor from the same pen. One famous description may be quoted:—

'Not learned, save in gracious household ways,
Not perfect, nay, but full of tender wants,
No Angel but a dearer being, all dipt
In Angel instincts, breathing Paradise,
Interpreter between the Gods and men,
Who look'd all native to her place, and yet
On tiptoe seem'd to touch upon a sphere
Too gross to tread, and all male minds perforce
Sway'd to her from their orbits as they moved,
And girdled her with music.'

But the poem's chief glory is to be found in the interspersed lyrics 'Home they brought her warrior dead,' 'The splendour falls on castle walls,' and especially those wonderful blank verse lyrics beginning 'Come down, O maid, from yonder mountain-heights' and 'Tears, idle tears.'

'In Memoriam' is the most deliberately philosophic of all Tennyson's works It is a collection of elegies in memory of his friend Arthur Hallam who died in 1833 Tennyson was profoundly moved by the sudden ending by death of their friendship, and expressed his grief in verse of everlasting truth and beauty But the loss also led him to reflect on the great problems of religion—immortality, the reality of evil, and free-will—which were agitating every sincere and religious thinker of his time; and the poem as a whole is the record of his passage from the numbness of absolute despair to what he calls 'the larger hope' He recognised that the discoveries of physical science made the simple optimism of the old religious creeds impossible But he was not prepared to give up therefore his belief in immortality and a divine government of the universe. His consciousness of his need for these things was alone evidence outweighing all the evidence against them. Still less would he surrender

the conviction based on experience of the value of faith and love.

> 'Tis better to have loved and lost
> Than never to have loved at all.'

The hundred and thirty-one separate poems composing 'In Memoriam' are written all in the same metre; but it is used with such consummate skill that it never becomes monotonous.

'Maud,' the third work which concerns itself with contemporary problems, is a criticism of the materialism of mid-Victorian England. It is the most uneven and spasmodic of the three. The lyric beauty of parts gives it a permanent value; but as a whole it suffers from the intrusion of ephemeral problems. The poet's indignation is sincere enough; but it takes its objects in their contemporary, not their universal aspect, that is to say, it is the indignation of the pamphleteer, not that of the poet. The scheme of this poem is entirely original and novel; and in it Tennyson gives the personal lyric its widest extension.

The Later Poems.

Tennyson's later work labours under two disadvantages. its bulk and the existence of the earlier poems to compare it with. Some of it, especially the 'Ballads' of 1880, is novel All of it is exquisitely finished. But as a whole it lacks the magic of the earlier and shorter poems 'The Idylls of the King' have been called a 'boudoir epic.' It is true that their atmosphere is neither primitive nor mediaeval; but they are intended to be ideal and not historical characterisations. Though they vary in poetical merit, they exhibit a uniform perfection of workmanship; and they are among the finest of narrative poems. The polish of the diction has been deemed excessive; but the variety and adaptability of the verse cannot be admired too much. Tennyson's plays are not among his best work. He had not the power of dramatic construction, and his characterisation was not the kind that drama needs. He was following his genius more faithfully when he adopted the looser construction of 'The Princess' or the episodic method of 'The Idylls.'

Tennyson's Style.

No poet has combined so wide a variety of poetic work with so uniform a perfection of workmanship. His inspiration may lag, but his diction is never careless or slovenly. It is as a rule simple rather than ornate. Often (for instance, in the 14th elegy of 'In Memoriam') every line of a passage taken by itself is prose, the rhythm is perfectly simple and there are no words not usual in prose, but the lines taken together are pure poetry And his simplicity—unlike Wordsworth's—never fails in dignity; at times it develops into a verbal felicity which is magical Such passages as the following are the perfect expression of romance:—

> 'and from them rose
> A cry that shivered to the tingling stars,
> And, as it were one voice, an agony
> Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
> All night in a waste land, when no one comes,
> Or hath come, since the making of the world.'

or

> '. . . like some full-breasted swan
> That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
> Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
> With swarthy webs '

Sometimes his fine scholarship gives his diction a classic quality akin to Matthew Arnold's, as in some of the stanzas of 'In Memoriam" :—

> 'Thou comest, much wept for; such a breeze
> Compelled thy canvas';

or

> 'a favourable speed
> Ruffle thy mirror'd mast, and lead
> Thro' prosperous floods his holy urn.'

And he can charge his diction with force when he wishes, as in 'Lucretius" .—

> 'for it seem'd
> A void was made in Nature; all her bonds
> Crack'd; and I saw the flaring atom-streams
> And torrents of her myriad universe,
> Running along the illimitable inane,
> Fly on to clash together again, and make
> Another and another frame of things
> For ever.'

His intimate knowledge of nature and sympathy with her in all her moods is evident in his wonderful descriptions and in the use he makes of these descriptions to express human feeling.

His virtues have their defects. He is guilty sometimes of 'prettiness,' of relying on verbal finish to atone for the absence of sincere feeling. He is not one of the great masters of passion; and he is lacking in profundity. When dealing with material impressions he is clarity itself; but he often becomes indefinite and vague when dealing with some problem of thought. His most ambitious work, 'In Memoriam,' is far from being his most successful, and its value consists rather in the beauty of its isolated elegies than in the effectiveness of its argument

Tennyson and Browning contrasted

No stronger contrast could be imagined than that between Tennyson and his great contemporary, Robert Browning Tennyson was representative of his age, he speaks with the accent of his age, and concerned himself immediately with its problems. Browning is of all poets the most independent of his time He takes his subjects from all ages, and treats all alike as if he were a contemporary Though Italy was for many years his home, his work bears few traces of Italy's contemporary struggle for freedom. He felt, of course, the stir of the ideas of his time; but their influence is less directly obvious in his work than in any other poet's. Again, Tennyson was not merely an English, but a European poet. Browning, in spite of his cosmopolitan interests, has peculiarities of style and outlook that make him inaccessible to the great bulk of foreigners. And the reason of this difference is easy to see. Tennyson is, perhaps, the most limpid of English poets, Browning the most difficult. Tennyson was classic in his sympathies. He was interested in the form of his utterances at least as much as in their matter, and perfected that form with infinite labour and exquisite literary taste Browning was preoccupied with the matter of his poems, he had too much to say to trouble about perfection of form, and, so long as his meaning got itself expressed somehow, was satisfied. He had neither Tennyson's ear for verbal music nor the same

sense of literary form. His verbal felicities seem accidental, not the result of premeditated art. But he had much the more powerful intellect of the two, much the greater capacity for, and insight into, passion.

Robert Browning, 1812-1889

Robert Browning was born in London in 1812 of well-to-do middle-class parents. He was privately educated, and acquired an enormous store of unusual learning His first poem, 'Pauline,' was published in 1833, having been written two years before; but his first work of importance was 'Paracelsus,' published in 1835 It has little incident, though it is dramatic in tone It is in fact a soul's history. Browning tells us himself that in his poetry the stress is laid 'in incidents in the development of a soul.' Such incidents are the effect of passion, especially the passion of love; and though Paracelsus' passion was the passion for knowledge, his last speech indicates the supreme importance which love was afterwards to take in Browning's view of life.—

'It was not strange I saw no good in man,
To overbalance all the wear and waste
Of faculties, displayed in vain, but born
To prosper in some better sphere; and why?
In my own heart love had not been made wise
To trace love's faint beginnings in mankind,
To know even hate is but a mask of love's,
To see a good in evil, and a hope
In ill success.'

The poet Aprile in 'Paracelsus' is a reminiscence probably of Shelley, who came nearest to expressing the truth of life as Browning saw it In 1837 the play 'Strafford' was written for Browning's friend Macready. In 1840 came 'Sordello,' another 'soul's history,' in which the poet's faults of involved thought and incompletely elucidated expression are quite mature 'Sordello' was followed between 1841 and 1846 by the series of plays, tragedies, and dramatic lyrics known as 'Bells and Pomegranates,' the first of which, 'Pippa Passes,' a drama, appeared in 1841 The series included also the tragedy, 'King Victor and King Charles,' and five other plays, as well as the two collections of 'Dramatic Lyrics' referred to

below. 'Pippa Passes' was built up round the idea of a person 'walking through life apparently too obscure to leave a trace of his or her passage, yet exercising a lasting though unconscious influence at every step of it.' One of Pippa's songs, though the most quoted piece of Browning, is too beautiful and too characteristic of him to be called hackneyed.—

'The year's at the spring
And day's at the morn;
Morning's at seven;
The hill-side's dew-pearled;
The lark's on the wing;
The snail's on the thorn;
God's in his heaven—
All's right with the world!'

The scheme of regular drama did not suit Browning's genius. Though the characters in his plays are simple—being usually embodiments of some single motive passion—and the spring of the action some simple idea, like the opposition of personal loyalty and political expediency, the plays themselves are involved and the action where not obscure is slight. They grow less and less suited to the stage, and approximate more and more to the type of dramatic monologue which was Browning's chief mode of representation in the succeeding—his richest—period.

'Dramatic Lyrics' and 'Men and Women'

The two series of 'Dramatic Lyrics' included in 'Bells and Pomegranates' not only established Browning's greatness as a lyric poet, but indicated the lines on which his dramatic genius could best express itself. The lyrics proper owe their excellence not so much to any verbal music or perfection of form—though many have these virtues—as to their wonderful vividness and immediate reality. The longer poems—such as 'Artemis Prologizes' in the volume of 1842 and 'Pictor Ignotus' or 'Saul' in that of 1845—are in form very like the 'Men and Women' of 1855.[1]

[1] Many of the poems in this volume were in the collected edition of his works distributed by the poet under other heads. e.g. 'The Last Ride Together' is to be found among 'Dramatic Romances.'

They are, however, more lucid and direct in diction; they have a simplicity not to be found in the later poems into which the poet's intellectuality crams more than he can lucidly express. But they have not the profundity of feeling which makes 'Men and Women' almost Browning's greatest work. . . .

This growth in insight and deepening feeling, was perhaps due to the one great event of his life, his meeting with the poetess Elizabeth Barrett and their marriage in 1846 During the fifteen years of their married life, spent chiefly in Florence, Browning published only two works, 'Christmas Eve and Easter Day' in 1850 and 'Men and Women' in 1855 The latter of these works is, if not quite his masterpiece, certainly his most popular work. In it his dramatic power was most effective. He had little genius for dramatic construction. His characters are not revealed by action and inter-action, as they should be in a drama meant for the stage, nor does the poet describe them from the point of view of a spectator. He lets each person in these poems tell his own story, give his own account of his actions and his explanation of them The result is characterisation as vivid and personal as anything in literature. And it is not only the character of persons but the character of events that is seized and perpetuated in this way The full emotional significance of a glance or a chance word, of a landscape or of an ambition, is perceived and expressed. Some stanzas from 'The Last Ride Together' may be quoted:—

I.

'I said—Then, dearest, since 'tis so,
Since now at length my fate I know,
Since nothing all my love avails,
Since all, my life seemed meant for, fails,
Since this was written and needs must be—
My whole heart rises up to bless
Your name in pride and thankfulness !
Take back the hope you gave—I claim
Only a memory of the same,
—And this beside, if you will not blame,
Your leave for one more last ride with me.

II

My mistress bent that brow of hers,
Those deep dark eyes where pride demurs
When pity would be softening through,
Fixed me a breathing-while or two
With life or death in the balance: Right!
The blood replenished me again;
My last thought was at least not vain.
I and my mistress, side by side
Shall be together, breathe and ride,
So, one day more am I deified.
Who knows but the world may end to-night?

. . . .

IV.

Then we began to ride. My soul
Smoothed itself out, a long-cramped scroll
Freshening and fluttering in the wind.
Past hopes already lay behind.
What need to strive with a life awry?
Had I said that, had I done this,
So might I gain, so might I miss.
Might she have loved me? just as well
She might have hated,—who can tell!
Where had I been now, if the worst befell?
And here we are riding, she and I.

. .

IX.

Who knows what's fit for us? Had fate
Proposed bliss here should sublimate
My being, had I signed the bond—
Still one must lead some life beyond,
Have a bliss to die with, dim-descried.
This foot once planted on the goal,
This glory-garland round my soul,
Could I descry such? Try and test!
I sink back shuddering from the quest.
Earth being so good, would heaven seem best?
Now, heaven and she are beyond this ride.

X

And yet,—she has not spoke so long!
What if heaven be, that, fair and strong
At life's best, with our eyes upturned

Whither life's flower is first discerned,
  We, fixed so, ever should so abide?
What if we still ride on, we two,
With life for ever old yet new,
Changed not in kind but in degree,
The instant made eternity,—
And heaven just prove that I and she
  Ride, ride together, for ever ride?'

One poem in this collection should be noticed. The last, 'One Word More,' is the only poem which he addressed directly to his wife, the only one in which he expressed his own and not a creation's passion.

'The Later Poems'

In 1861 Mrs. Browning died, and Browning came to live in London. He was now beginning to achieve popularity with a reading public tired of the ultra-refinement of Tennyson In 1868-1869 he put his popularity to the severest possible test with 'The Ring and the Book,' his longest and greatest poem In this is a further application of his dramatic method. The story is a murder story A husband kills his wife and defends himself by accusing her unjustly of unfaithfulness. Not only does each of the characters tell his own story; but the gossip of Rome for and against the husband and wife is given, the speeches of counsel, and the statement of the aged Pope to whom the husband appealed. Thus the story is shown in every possible light. Every aspect is brought out, and the tragedy lives again with almost more than the reality of a contemporary event. 'The Ring and the Book' was followed by a long succession of other works—versified novels, translations (in a setting) from the Greek, 'Dramatic Idylls,' 'Fancies and Facts.' 'Asolando,' the last collection, was published on the day of the poet's death, Dec 12th, 1889.

Browning's 'Obscurity.'

The obscurity of Browning was at one time proverbial. Obscurity, however, is not the true word to describe the quality of his diction. Some of the lyrics of 1840-1850 are lucidity itself, and he is never difficult through careless or obscure thinking. He is difficult, but he always knows exactly what he means. Vividness and acute definition are keynotes of his thought;

and they are usually to be found in the expression if the reader is intent. His poems are really overcrowded. They give one the impression of a powerful personality in eager haste to express something of supreme importance; dragging in words from every field of thought and activity and forcibly adapting them; breaking in stubborn rhythms and awkward rhymes to its purpose—and usually succeeding. At his best his spiritual force, working at a white heat, fuses matter and form into a perfect unity And though his 'shorthand' at times becomes a mannerism, his rhythm and metre usually fit and help out the sense of a passage Another cause, not of obscurity but of difficulty, is that the very vividness of the crowded detail hinders the reader from grasping the sense of a whole passage or poem.

Browning's Philosophy

No poet is more provocative of thought than Browning; but it is not the method of poetry to give an elaborated and coördinated theory of life and the universe He is a seer, expressing the thing he sees 'All poetry,' he tells us, 'is the problem of putting the infinite into the finite.' Sometimes he seems, like Wordsworth, to see God in everything, and the universe real and important only in that aspect But his strong sense of individuality prevented him from adopting Pantheism as a creed. He felt that the eternal, omnipotent and infinite Deity was a reality, but he felt just as strongly that the individual man, or bird, or rock, was real and important. The strength of his merely physical vision, and the corresponding clearness of his intellectual and imaginative grasp of life made him cling to the actual, and prevented him from following Shelley into the realm of abstractions But for Browning, Professor Herford says, 'the finite is not the rival or antithesis, but the very language of the infinite.' And it is love that makes the two one. Through love man becomes divine, and life acquires significance.

'For life with all it yields of joy and woe—
Is just our chance of the prize of learning love.'

And just as men become divine through love, so through love God becomes human.

'So the All Great were the All-Loving too,—
So, through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying, "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!"'

Hence the invocation of Love at the end of the first book of 'The Ring and the Book,' the 'posy' of the ring, might be taken as the dedication of all his work.—

'O lyric Love, half-angel and half-bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire,—
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face,—
Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart—
When the first summons from the darkling earth
Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of the glory—to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer or to die,—
This is the same voice: can thy soul know change?
Hail then, and hearken from the realms of help!'

A classic reaction: Matthew Arnold, 1822-1888

Great as were their differences, Tennyson and Browning were both Romanticists. The reaction in favour of some sort of Classicism came in the middle of the century in the work of a younger poet, Matthew Arnold. Arnold entirely failed to catch the ear of the public when he first offered it his poems in 1849-1853; but his audience has steadily grown ever since, and it is doubtful if any poetry of that time is so widely read to-day as Arnold's. Arnold's classicism is not the classicism of the eighteenth century. But it is, just as that was, a reaction against the undisciplined freedom of the romantic poetry. Arnold's theory of poetry was not content to let the poet's inspiration be his sole and sufficient guide. He must derive the principles and standards of his art from a study of the masters of the art, and express himself in conformity with those principles and standards. And the first rule is that the subject is the determining factor in a poem. The romantic poet was content to let his genius flow easily wherever it listed for the sake of the beauty of separate parts. Arnold maintained that every poem should be a unity, its treatment determined by its subject, and every part subordinated to

the whole. The kind of subject for poetic treatment he describes in the famous preface to the 'Poems' of 1853 'The Poet, then, has in the first place to select an excellent action; and what actions are the most excellent? Those, certainly, which most powerfully appeal to the great primary human affections; to those elementary feelings which subsist permanently in the race, and which are independent of time.' It is this choice of an excellent action, its treatment as a unity, with due subordination of part to whole, and a sustained and even dignity of action, which constitute the 'grand style' Of this grand style the Greeks are the unapproached masters, and therefore their works are the touchstone and model of all poetry Arnold was not only a true poet but a great critic; and it is this combination that determined his views and makes them so important.

Arnold's style

Arnold has little of the magic of Tennyson, little of the passionate eloquence of Browning. His diction has, however, always dignity, which rises at times to supreme felicity, as in the line,

'The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea.

The best examples of his treatment of a great subject are to be found, not in his dramatic poems 'Empedocles on Etna' and 'Merope,' but in the narratives 'Sohrab and Rustum' and 'Balder Dead,' in which he achieves an Homeric simplicity and dignity of style We may quote the conclusion of 'Sohrab and Rustum' as an example —

'But the majestic River floated on,
Out of the mist and hum of that low land,
Into the frosty starlight, and there moved,
Rejoicing, through the hushed Chorasmian waste,
Under the solitary moon;—he flow'd
Right for the Polar Star, past Orgunjé,
Brimming, and bright, and large, then sands begin
To hem his watery march, and dam his streams,
And split his currents; that for many a league
The shorn and parcell'd Oxus strains along
Through beds of sand and matted rushy isles—
Oxus, forgetting the bright speed he had
In his high mountain-cradle in Pamere,

A foil'd circuitous wanderer—till at last
The long'd-for dash of waves is heard, and wide
His luminous home of waters opens, bright
And tranquil, from whose floor the new-bathed stars
Emerge, and shine upon the Aral Sea'

His thought

The most typical part of his work, however, are the lyrics and elegies, in which he states his attitude to the thought of his time. Some of the lyrics are indeed passionate (for example the collection called 'Switzerland'), but the majority are written in the same key as the elegiac poems. The dominant mood is one of rather melancholy reflection. Arnold felt more intimately than any of his contemporaries the difficulty of life in

'this our time
Of doubts, disputes, distractions, fears.'

He suffered more intensely than any of them from

'this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'er-taxed, its palsied hearts'

He looked everywhere for help, and found help in many quarters without finding anything that would give him peace. Of English poets the one to whom he owed most was Wordsworth. Byron's force and passion he admired, but could not imitate. Goethe, de Sénancour, the Greeks, his father—he acknowledged his debt to all, but was still unsatisfied. Perhaps the most typical of his poems is the 'Scholar-Gipsy'—the story of the seventeenth-century scholar who left Oxford to find the secret of life among the gipsies and became immortal through his faith in his search,

'Still nursing the unconquerable hope
Still clutching the inviolable shade,
With a free, onward impulse brushing through
By night the silver'd branches of the glade'

Arnold envies him and contrasts him with the people of his own time:—

'But fly our paths, our feverish contact fly!
For strong the infection of our mental strife,

Which, though it gives no bliss, yet spoils for rest;
And we should win thee from thy own fair life,
Like us distracted, and like us unblest
Soon, soon thy cheer would die,
Thy hopes grow timorous, and unfixed thy powers,
And thy clear aims be cross and shifting made;
And then thy glad perennial youth would fade,
Fade, and grow old at last, and die like ours.'

He envies anyone with an assured faith, like the clergyman in the wonderful sonnet on East London, and while resigning himself to wait for some greater thinker or some happier age to resolve his doubts, seems himself to take refuge in a kind of fatalism The 'Buried Life' seems to suggest that our troubles and questionings are futile. our fate is determined beforehand.

'Fate which foresaw
How frivolous a baby man would be—
By what distractions he would be possess'd,
How he would pour himself in every strife,
And well-nigh change his own identity—
That it might keep from his capricious play
His genuine self, and force him to obey
Even in his own despite his being's law,
Bade through the deep recesses of our breast
The unregarded river of our life
Pursue with indiscernible flow its way;
And that we should not see
The buried stream, and seem to be
Eddying at large in blind uncertainty,
Though driving on with it eternally'

Arnold's poetry was not appreciated by his own day. The following generation has found in it perhaps the most complete expression in Victorian poetry of its religious and ethical life

A renewed Romantic impulse

Matthew Arnold has had a growing influence on English poetry, but this influence was not felt by his contemporaries Rather was there a renewal of the romantic impulse Three poets, closely associated in friendship, found a renewed inspiration in the art and literature of the middle ages and discovered new possibilities of magic and romance in English verse. They

were Dante Charles Gabriel Rossetti, an Italian born in England, William Morris, and Algernon Charles Swinburne. The eighteenth century had called the middle ages "Gothic" in contempt of their art. The nineteenth century was constantly going back to them for guidance in matters of art. Scott's novels and the Gothic revival in architecture are instances of this interest. The Oxford movement was a manifestation of it in theology, and the effects of that movement not only on theology but on literature and art have not yet worked themselves out. In art the corresponding movement was the formation of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose object is expressed in its name. In Literature Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson had all felt and expressed the mystery and romance of the age of chivalry But no expression of the permanent value and inspiration of mediaeval ideas is more important than the work of the three poets we have now to consider.

They have much in common. All three have the art of getting a music out of words and rhythm apart from the sense All three, especially the artist Rossetti, show the influence of the art of painting Their poems suggest pictures with a novel vividness All make use of mediaeval imagery, mediaeval legend, and mediaeval ideas, and create the atmosphere of mediaeval romance Their middle ages are no more historical than those of Tennyson's 'Idylls', but they do not profess to be The atmosphere of their works is the atmosphere of a dream, not of any real place or time, and their morality is the morality of dream-world They are not troubled with the doubts and difficulties that make up the substance of so much of the poetry of Tennyson and Arnold. It is significant that Rossetti and Swinburne were among the earliest prophets of Browning's greatness, for Browning too found life interesting enough without discussing the effects on religion of the theory of evolution. The religion of these later romanticists is the religion of beauty They make beauty the end of life, they criticise their own time for its neglect of beauty, and they delight in any time in which beautiful things were produced.

D. G. Rossetti (1828-1882), the eldest of them, was more famous in his own time as an artist and a member of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood than as a poet. His poems were not published till 1870, though they were written much earlier. His acquaintance with the past was reached through the poetry of Italy, and the greatest influences in forming his poetry were Dante and his pictorial art. Though he had no regular academic training, he had cultivated assiduously his natural feeling for the beauty and value of the individual word, and acquired that exact and suggestive use of words which constitutes true scholarship.

D. G. Rossetti, 1828-1882.

William Morris (1834-1896) was a man of much greater knowledge and much wider activities. His 'Defence of Guenevere, and other Poems,' published in 1858, was the first work of the school to be given to the public; and the public simply ignored it. It was the fashion among Morris' set at Oxford, so his biographer tells us, to regard Tennyson's poems as the final achievement in poetry, beyond which it was impossible to go. In this, his first volume, Morris uses the same mediaeval sources as Tennyson uses for his 'Idylls,' with much better effect. Tennyson took Malory's chronicle, retold the stories in polished verse, and infused into them the morality of mid-Victorian England. Morris was steeped in Malory and Froissart and the art of their time, and avoids the mistake of using their stories as allegories with a suggestion of moral instruction.

William Morris, 1834-1896.

The atmosphere, however, which Morris creates so wonderfully is not that of the historical middle ages, but rather that of a fairy tale. He had a child's love of wonderful stories, and, after a silence of ten years, during which he first attempted under Rossetti's influence to become a painter, and then found his chief work in artistic craftsmanship, he began the long series of narratives which form the bulk of his poetical work. In the 'Earthly Paradise' he collects in one setting tales from classical and Teutonic mythology as well as from mediaeval sources. He does not attempt to give them a historical colour appropriate to their origin, but treats

them uniformly. His metre is a delightfully easy and limpid decasyllabic couplet, his manner the manner of a mediaeval story-teller; so that the Greek tales are seen as it were through the coloured glass of mediaeval sentiment. Later he became devoted to the literature of Scandinavia and Iceland The poem "Sigurd the Volsung" (1877), and his translations of the 'Grettis' and 'Volsunga' Sagas illustrate this interest; but its chief result was a series of romances, written in prose with occasional verse, in a language artificially archaic, the atmosphere of which is that of a primitive Teutonic society "The House of the Wolfings" (1889) was the first, "The Sundering Flood" the last of the seven Throughout his literary career he was busily engaged in emphasising the importance of beauty by reviving and practising the art-crafts

A C Swinburne, 1837-1909

Swinburne, who was born in 1837 and died in April 1909, is a greater poet than either Rossetti or Morris He is one of the most prolific of poets, and the variety of his work is as surprising as its volume In his first volumes the most noticeable influence is that of the Elizabethans; but very soon he attained to a style that was quite new in literature. He had an intimate acquaintance with the literatures of Greece, France, and England, and he learnt something from each He had a command of metrical expression which no other English poet has ever equalled, especially is his skill shown in the perfect ease with which he uses and adapts the complicated scheme of the old French Ballade and similar metres. But his most characteristic quality is the sheer verbal music, obtained by an instinctive selection of musical vowel and consonant combinations, of poems like 'The Garden of Proserpine' He creates his atmosphere not by images and meanings, but by the mere flow of the rhythm and music of the sounds. The imagery and meanings help; the thought is never careless or confused, but no poet has ever approximated so closely to music. His technical facility at times becomes a snare. in his later works especially there is much versification which, while technically perfect, expresses no very profound emotion and does not help forward much the development of the poem.

'Poems and Ballads' was hailed as immoral. It certainly represents in a most convincing manner certain phases of passion about which English poetry is usually silent But Swinburne derived his literary traditions at least as much from France as from England, and he claims as a principle of art the absolute freedom of the artist in the choice of subject and method of treatment. And he is rather the poet of pain than of the passion of love, it is of the weariness and regrets of remembered passion that he writes in his most characteristic mood Many of his poems reflect his sympathy with the revolutionary movements of the third quarter of the century. Perhaps the most important of his works are 'Atalanta in Calydon' (1864) with its wonderful choruses, 'Poems and Ballads' (1866) which established his reputation, 'Songs before Sunrise' (1871), the second series of 'Poems and Ballads' (1878), 'Tristram of Lyonnesse' (1882), and 'Mary Stuart' (1881). He also published several volumes of prose criticism

Other Poets of the Age of Tennyson

The six poets we have dealt with by no means exhaust the riches of Victorian poetry There were many others—writers whose work, though limited in bulk, had the quality of genuine poetry; and some who, if not so important as the six writers mentioned, are above the rank of minor poets Of the latter Elizabeth Barrett (1806-1861), the wife of Robert Browning, is one Her work has great faults—a tendency to gush, and a carelessness and lack of taste in diction. At the same time she has a great capacity for sincere feeling and a faculty of expressing it simply; her work is especially rich in pathos She had many subjects —religion, romance, love—and a great command of varied metrical expression. She is at her best where the form she has adopted imposes restraint on her tendency to excessive fluency, as for instance in the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese' Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) had not Mrs Browning's depth or passion; but she avoided her defects. Her claim to greatness is two-fold. First, she expresses in verse of an exquisite musical quality a sense of romance almost equal to her brother's, and thus takes

her place by the side of her brother and Morris; and secondly, she is one of the few verse-writers who have found in orthodox religion an inspiration to genuine poetry. Her devotional poems, while they express no novel or exciting view of religion, are sincerity itself, and their form, as is the case with all her work, is exquisite.

Lyric poetry.

No period of English literature is richer in fine lyric poetry than the age of Tennyson. There is a richness and variety of melody which show that the Victorians had studied with effect the work of their predecessors. Yet, while they learnt more from their predecessors than perhaps the poets of any other age had done, they were not mere imitators. They accepted faithfully every revelation of the possibilities of their instrument; but the uses to which they put it were new, and they themselves discovered new possibilities in it. Generalisations over so large and varied a mass of work are dangerous; one, however, may be ventured. It is distinguished from the poetry of other epochs by its intimate appreciation of the beauty of nature and of the bearing that nature's beauty has on human life. The poetry of the nineteenth century, like the science of the nineteenth century, breaks down the barrier between man and external nature, and insists on the unity of all things. Thus Wordsworth would seem to be the most important poet of the nineteenth century, and Victorian poetry as a whole an expression of the impulse that produced 'Lyrical Ballads' in 1798.

II. Prose Fiction.

The eighteenth century invented the novel, but left the nineteenth century to reap the full benefits of the invention. The fundamental thing in the novel, the delineation of character in narrative, was grasped by Fielding, Richardson, and Smollett, and carried out with complete success; but they did not realise the dramatic possibilities of plot-construction. Their method was leisurely and discursive, the construction of the story loose and casual. Episodes,

especially humorous adventures, are admitted which have no strict relevance to the development of the story. Their greatness lay in their power of creating character. Scott enormously widened the scope of prose fiction by inventing the historical novel. His contemporary, Jane Austen, carried its development forward in another direction by placing the chief interest of her novels in the faithful delineation of contemporary manners Incident in her novels is of the quietest and most everyday kind; but it is sufficient to develop the characters. If Scott made the novel a vehicle for romance, Miss Austen showed its possibilities for the portrayal of quiet realism.

Charles Dickens, 1812-1870

Scott's success brought him a host of imitators, of whom two at any rate, Harrison Ainsworth and G P. R James, had a wide popularity The next great English novelist, however, owed little or nothing to Scott. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) is one of the most original of English writers He had no regular education and owed little to any predecessors In his boyhood he read eagerly the eighteenth century novelists, and he has some affinity with Smollett, but his real literary training was his work as a journalist, which quickened his powers of observation and helped him to a faculty of rapid and easy expression. The story of his boyhood and youth, so far as it is relevant to the formation of his character as a writer, is told by himself in 'David Copperfield' His first book, 'Sketches by Boz,' was published in 1836, and was an immediate success It has the chief characteristics of his later work—the humour, farcical at times, and the pathos, strained at times, which he found in 'everyday life and everyday people' His next book, 'The Pickwick Papers,' was intended to serve merely as letter-press to a series of drawings by the caricaturist Seymour It developed into a coherent story only when the public's appreciation of its humour made author more important than artist. The first novel constructed on orthodox lines was 'Oliver Twist' (1837-1838). In accordance with the fashion of the time all Dickens' and Thackeray's novels were published serially in parts This may be one reason for their great length

It is significant that Dickens' most popular, and in many respects most characteristic, work should not originally have been intended for a novel.

Construction of his novels

Lacking an academic training, he was not at first interested in questions of literary form. He was not concerned to discover and apply principles underlying the work of predecessors. The work of creation with him was entirely spontaneous He could not help writing, and his superabundant vitality poured itself out in a long procession of characters whose adventures were narrated with as little artifice and as much zest as a child tells its adventures. This does not mean that his work is careless it certainly is not But in his early work he has little regard for any unities of time or place. He is not afraid of long digressions which do not help forward the story. His stages are crowded, and contain many persons whose story is not essential to the development of the main story Hence the early novels of Dickens are in form very like the novels of the eighteenth century. Their unity depends not so much on any plot as on an individual The story is the story of that individual's adventures on his journey through life, and usually begins at the beginning with his birth

After 'David Copperfield,' however, we find a more conscious art and an approximation to the later form of the novel. In 'Bleak House,' for instance, the unifying interest of the story is not any individual character, but the great Chancery suit of Jarndyce and Jarndyce. The whole action of the book springs from this suit, and the different persons are connected with one another by their common relation to it. Thus in Dickens, as in English literature generally, the chief form of prose fiction changed from simple narrative to something more akin to the drama. The closer unity and more careful construction of the later form, however, did not suit his genius so well as the unfettered freedom of the earlier. Irrelevancies and digressions that would have been fatal in a lesser man assumed the character of virtues in Dickens on account of his great gift of humour.

His humour

The humour of Dickens is his greatest quality. It makes everything he wrote unmistakably characteristic of him. It appears in the turn of his phrases, in a certain indirectness of statement which throws into relief a comic element in anything he wishes to describe. It is even more obvious in his most typical characters. The characters most typical of Dickens are not the heroes and heroines of his novels, not the ordinary persons whose originals are to be found in any company of middle-class Englishmen, but those persons, of obscure station but striking individuality, who may have an important bearing on the plot but would be equally welcome if they had none. Sam Weller and his even greater father, Mrs Gamp, Captain Cuttle, Mr Micawber are unlike any other characters in fiction. It has been objected that they are not true to life. It might indeed be difficult to find their exact prototypes; but they are unmistakably alive. Every phrase they utter is redolent of their individuality. Collectively they sum up much of the humour of English life in Dickens' time.

Mastery of the grotesque.

Closely connected with his power of humorous characterisation is Dickens' mastery of the grotesque and terrible. The dwarf Quilp in 'The Old Curiosity Shop,' Dennis the hangman in 'Barnaby Rudge,' Uriah Heep in 'David Copperfield' are as characteristic of him in their way as any of the comic figures. The ultimate source of true humour is a certain independence and individuality of outlook; and the same eyes which found much to excite laughter in their survey of the world found much to excite fear. And they found much to excite tears. Though a proneness to labour the pathetic is one of his faults, Dickens' pathos gives much of its value to his work. Such a character as Little Nell in 'The Old Curiosity Shop' has sentiment without any sentimentalism.

Reforming zeal

One other feature in Dickens' novels should be noted, since it was one he attached importance to himself, namely his use of them to reveal abuses and advocate reforms. The abuses of Poor Law administration are pilloried in 'Oliver Twist';

the evils of imprisonment for debt in 'Pickwick,' 'David Copperfield,' and 'Little Dorrit'; the law's delay in 'Bleak House,' the cumbrousness of government procedure in 'The Circumlocution Office' of 'Little Dorrit,' the rottenness of the private school in 'Nicholas Nickleby.' On these subjects Dickens felt strongly, and embodied in the characters and incidents of his story most effective criticisms of them

Dickens was born in the lower middle class and drew his scenes and characters from the middle and lower classes His portraiture of members of the official and leisured classes was nearly always satirical in intention, and was usually unsuccessful. For a full and fair picture of the 'upper' classes we must go to his great contemporary, William Makepeace Thackeray.

William Makepeace Thackeray, 1811-1863

Thackeray was born in India in 1811 and educated at Charterhouse and Cambridge. He had a private fortune and devoted himself first to art. His early writings were miscellaneous in character, appearing chiefly in 'Frazer's Magazine' and 'Punch' It was not till 1847-1848 that he published the first of his great novels, 'Vanity Fair' 'Pendennis,' which is chiefly interesting from its autobiographical element, appeared in 1849-1850, 'Esmond' in 1852, 'The Newcomes' in 1853-1855, 'The Virginians' in 1857-1858 In 1860 he became editor of the 'Cornhill Magazine,' to which he contributed 'Lovel the Widower,' 'Philip,' and a series of essays called 'The Roundabout Papers' He died in 1863

Compared with Dickens.

In many respects Thackeray presents a strong contrast to Dickens. He came of a different class, and represented the life of a different class in his novels He had much more regular education, and had historical and literary sympathies that Dickens lacked. He had not Dickens' industry, but his literary product was more varied, including a good deal of literary criticism and some excellent light verse. His humour is different It is more reflective than that of Dickens, and the style it colours is more the style of a scholar and reader. His sense of humour expresses

itself most easily in comment on the story and addresses to the reader, while that of Dickens finds its most natural expression in the creation of character. Again, the more educated taste of Thackeray saves him from the melodrama into which Dickens sometimes lapses. His pathos is not so sentimental, springing as it does from the characters of the story and issuing in action. At the same time Thackeray has something in common with Dickens. He shared his admiration of the eighteenth-century novelists, and adopted their methods of telling a story. His novels are biographical, pictures of the life and times of a particular person whose career is traced from birth onwards. The chief interest is always in the characters, not in the plots. In fact the development of the novel into a rigorous unity in which every character and every incident is strictly subordinated to a central dramatic purpose has been the work not of English, but of French novelists.

Thackeray's characters.

Thackeray's greatness lies in his power of creating character. He enriched English literature with a long series of figures, each of which is typical of a class without losing any of its individuality. Becky Sharp is the typical adventuress for all time; Colonel Newcome is the perfect exemplar of an English gentleman. And these characters are true to life They are typical of their class, not as the puppets in a morality play are typical, by being labelled with some outstanding attribute, but as real persons are typical of their class. Their virtue or foible is only one among many attributes, only one rather striking aspect of a complete and many-sided personality

He allows himself ample scope for making his persons real. His stories are long, they cover sometimes a couple of generations They are peopled by a multitude of persons, who throw light on one another in a long succession of quiet but effective situations. The dialogue is as near to the speech of real life as the art of fiction will permit; for in no department of art does exact photographic reproduction give the living and breathing reality which true art possesses. At times the action of the novel rises to

situations of tense emotion, as in the scene of the scandal at Curzon Street in "Vanity Fair" As a rule, however, Thackeray prefers to reproduce the even tenour of English life without exciting incidents; and the scale of his stories enables him to develop his characters without the aid of frequent emotional crises He is a little shy of passion in all its forms. It is not that he is incapable of it, but he seems to adopt the ordinary educated Englishman's attitude, which regards passion as showing a want of self-control, and as therefore not quite respectable, and his treatment of it is usually quizzical, sympathetic but not wholly serious From this habit his novels gain in verisimilitude as a picture of English society, but they lose in dramatic force

His "cynicism"

This habit of quizzing both the characters of his books and his readers won Thackeray a reputation for cynicism Cynic, however, he was not, there is no bitterness in his humour or his satire The only justification for the charge is that he does not take people so seriously as they take themselves, and few humourists would escape the charge of cynicism if that is sufficient justification for it. Unlike Dickens, he was not interested in reform His books are not troubled with any 'purpose' But he had a very keen eye for the foibles of humanity, and pointed them out without bitterness, but with a certain delight And he took a pleasure in affecting a cynical attitude His comments on the story and long addresses to the reader are in the style of the kindly but disillusioned man of the world, but the stories themselves have no lack of faith in human nature

'Esmond'

'Esmond' requires separate attention, because it was an innovation in English literature It was an historical novel in which the interest lay not so much in the incidents as in the characters It sought to infuse into a true novel of character that spirit of romance which belongs to a story placed in another age To write it required something more than an archaeologist's or an historian's knowledge of the time in which the action was placed, and it is one of Thackeray's greatest achievements because he was steeped in the life and literature of the

eighteenth century As his whole work shows, he was a person of easy temper and leisurely habits who would feel quite at home in the age of 'The Spectator.'

Dickens and Thackeray had no successor of genius so varied and abundant as their own till George Meredith gave the world his books But in the sixteen years that separated Dickens from Meredith there were born several writers whose achievement is important in the history of English literature The first of these, Anthony Trollope (1815-1882), is not a writer of great distinction. He wrote a great number of novels which exhibit uniformly careful workmanship without much inspiration. Some of his chronicles of quiet country life, especially the Barsetshire series, are excellent, but he is chiefly interesting as being typical of a larger number of novelists who in the third quarter of the century satisfied the English public's avidity for unexciting novels of domestic fiction. The fashion was perhaps set by a younger contemporary who had published her last work before Trollope published his first

Anthony Trollope, 1816-1882

Charlotte Bronte, one of three sisters of Celtic extraction, was born and lived practically all her life in the West Riding of Yorkshire. No English writer ever grasped and expressed the spirit of a locality more intimately than she and her sister Emily Her novels were all based on her personal experiences, and acquire a peculiar vividness from that fact. One of the most living and affecting pictures of childhood is the part of 'Jane Eyre' which describes her old school Her heroines followed closely the lines of her own character in 'Jane Eyre' and 'Villette,' of her sister Emily's in 'Shirley' The minor characters of her novels were portraits of her friends and acquaintances, and most of the scenes of her novels can be identified from her descriptions She has none of the fecundity of genius which enabled Dickens and Thackeray to create a whole world of types and persons, and she had little of their humour. Her scope was strictly limited by her own rather restricted social intercourse But within those limits she had powers which belong only to genius. She had a

Charlotte Bronte, 1816-1855

knowledge of passion which must have been considered very shocking in a mid-Victorian lady, and would certainly have ruined her prospects in the profession for which she was intended—that of governess She had a considerable power of satire, which she used a little unkindly to express her contempt for much of the provincial society in which she moved Her style is as a rule simple and direct, a little grandiloquent in some of the reflective passages, but forcible and eloquent in the expression of feeling

George Eliot, 1819-1880

Very different was the other great woman novelist of the period. George Eliot—her real name was Mary Anne Evans—was born in Warwickshire in 1819 She spent the greater part of her life in London, and did a great deal of writing of a philosophical and critical character before attempting fiction. But her Warwickshire life—the life of the English village before the railway came to disturb it—provided the substance of most of her novels. She had a wonderful faculty of observation, which enabled her to reproduce exactly the mannerisms of rustic habit and speech The conversation of the rustics in the village inn at the beginning of 'Silas Marner' is as convincing as if the reader was in the inn listening. And she understood the whole country-side, its interrelations, its hierarchies and standards of value, and could give a complete picture of its life Her appreciation of the humour of her country characters is not shown in isolated conversations or observed eccentricities only, it enabled her to create a character like Mrs. Poyser, who embodied that humour and expressed it in pithy phrases that have become proverbial Even greater than her humour was her command of pathos. There are few figures in fiction for whom the reader has more pity than Maggie Tulliver, and the pathos of her story springs inevitably from her character and surroundings In drawing women George Eliot was rarely at fault, her male characters are not so convincing. She was rather inclined to make of them unnatural embodiments of her rather strenuous moral views Her style too suffered from an over-fondness for scientific and philosophical jargon. Her intellect was apt to get the better of

her; and her touch was never quite sure when she wandered from the country and the people of her youth.

In George Eliot the novel took its modern form.

Development of the Novel

Every story—except perhaps 'The Mill on the Floss'—derives its unity from its plot. The different episodes are all related to each other and subordinated to the main story. The chief appeal to the emotions of the reader is made by the inevitable catastrophe towards which the whole action moves. As an example of dramatic construction 'Middlemarch' is the greatest of the novels. The tragedies of Bulstrode's downfall and of Dr. Lydgate's lapse from his ideals are perfectly interwoven with the main plot, and the whole movement of the action has the inevitableness of great drama. George Eliot was very much influenced by the agnostic school of philosophers and theologians who conducted the 'Westminster Review' in the fifties. Her novels have a special appeal for the type of mind which is troubled by (or delights in) religious difficulties. The mood of much of her work is not unlike that of Matthew Arnold's poems. But in spite of her great ability she was not an original thinker, and contributed nothing to philosophic thought or religious theory.

George Meredith, 1828-1909

A much more powerful thinker and a greater novelist is George Meredith. His first novel, 'The Ordeal of Richard Feverel,' was published in 1859, only two years after George Eliot's first novel. His greatness was not recognised for many years; and the public were perhaps not much to blame, since his fiction was something quite new. His power of creating character is on a level with that of Dickens and Thackeray. His novels are much more elaborately and carefully constructed. He is obscure and difficult, but the obscurity is certainly not due to loose or incomplete thinking. The cause of his obscurity is the source of his originality. Incident in his novels is almost all psychological, *i.e.* actions are described, not as they would strike an observer, but from the point of view of the actor. The author sees life as a complex of emotions, with passion as the truest reality. He is difficult because

his standard of values is something entirely new His thought moves in a higher plane than that of every-day life To understand him the reader has to climb (or be lifted) to his altitude, then his view becomes intelligible, since what seemed to be mountains looked at from the dead-level of every-day life are seen to be only hills, and the true peaks are revealed behind and above them In a sense the interest of novels had always been psychological, but the standpoint had been that of every-day life and the actions were objectively described.

The Psychological Novel

In Meredith the analysis of motive becomes much subtler; the precise emotional significance of every action is estimated, and prominence given to it in accordance with that estimate And the most important fiction of subsequent writers has followed Meredith in transferring the interest of the novel from what may be called the spectacular to the psychological aspect of the characters and action.

III. History and Criticism.

Change in the Conditions of Publication

The nineteenth century saw an enormous growth in the audience which an English author could address Not only was there an increase in population, but the spread of education increased the proportion of the population who were interested in literature and accessible to new ideas. Book-making has become a trade, but the output of books now which can claim consideration as literature is greater than it has ever been before One new form of publication—the periodical—has had especial influence on the literature we are now considering. The stately and conservative reviews —the 'Edinburgh' and 'Quarterly'—set the standard of periodical literature for the first half of the century. 'Blackwood's' was somewhat lighter in tone, and 'Frazer's' more daring, daring enough to publish even 'Sartor Resartus' Early in the second half of the century the 'Cornhill,' a shilling magazine, was founded under the

editorship of Thackeray, and soon found imitators. From that time forward most prose writers made their début in the pages of some periodical, and any writer had there his opportunity, if he had some genuine contribution to make to the criticism, literary, artistic, social, or moral, of his time

Nor did promising critics lack other encouragement. The age, as we have seen, was one of great intellectual activity and great changes. It was interested in things, and welcomed anyone who could give it new interests Especially did it give an eager hearing to anyone who could make past ages live again Moreover, its energies did not always choose ideal outlets, and the very activity of the age gave abundant opportunity and stimulus to prophet and teacher. Hence the age of Tennyson has a multitude of prose writers —historians, essayists, and critics of every kind—too numerous to be discussed separately A few will be taken as representative, and even they will be more numerous than the scale of this book would permit if the age were not so many-sided in its activities and interests.

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859)

Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859) is perhaps the most popular of English historians. His immediate success is interesting as indicating the tastes of his contemporaries. He was a prominent Whig politician, helped his party to pass the first Reform Bill, and received as reward the post of Legal Member of the Council of India. His reputation as an author was made by a series of essays, historical and biographical, in the 'Edinburgh Review' It was increased by his verse, a series of historical ballads, and confirmed by the four volumes which was all he lived to complete of a detailed 'History of England from the Accession of James II'

Merits and Defects as a Historian

As a historian Macaulay's chief virtue is the vividness of the picture he can give of a past age or a personality This vividness is due to two things · his great erudition, and his skill as a writer; and it is with this latter quality that we are chiefly concerned. His virtues and his faults as a writer spring from the same fundamental fact, that Macaulay is a

rhetorician. The most obvious characteristic of everything he wrote is its absolute clearness It is never necessary to re-read anything he wrote to discover its full meaning. And this virtue has its corresponding defect in a lack of suggestiveness, an absence of mystery The clearness is obtained by the means which a speaker, whose audience cannot turn back a page to recover anything it has forgotten, is bound to adopt The ideas are repeated in a number of slightly different forms, and fixed in the reader's mind by a constant succession of illustrations and comparisons Whether these devices are legitimate in prose which is intended to be read and not heard is doubtful; but their effectiveness is proved by the multitude of Macaulay's imitators

Macaulay's great defect as a historian is his partiality. He had strong religious and political views, which degenerated into prejudices when imported into his treatment of other times He is always an advocate, painting his heroes as perfect and their enemies as villains. Much of his popularity is due to this habit, since history is given a much more lively interest by being treated in the style of contemporary politics He carries this tendency to extremes, as in the essay on Boswell, where he tries to show that Boswell wrote the greatest of biographies because he was the meanest of men And this partiality is emphasized by an objection to half-tones Everything must be black or white, everybody wholly good or wholly bad Macaulay's passion for absolute clearness and strict definition led him often to represent as certain what was doubtful, as clear what was obscure All these are the qualities of the rhetorician, whose business is to persuade, and to persuade he must be lucid, partisan, and dogmatic.

His Style.

The style which enables Macaulay to make his views so convincing has often been imitated without being equalled. Its principle is the use, instead of the old periodic sentence, of short sentences, so cleverly managed as never to become monotonous, built up into paragraphs. It does not admit of any dwelling on single words to extract their full value; but Macaulay was careful always to use good words, avoiding colloquialisms

and neologisms We will quote as an example a short passage from Ch VIII of the History —

'At ten the Court again met. The crowd was greater than ever The jury appeared in their box; and there was a breathless stillness Sir Samuel Astry spoke. "Do you find the defendants, or any of them, guilty of the misdemeanour whereof they are impeached, or not guilty?" Sir Roger Langley answered, "Not guilty" As the words were uttered, Halifax sprang up and waved his hat. At that signal, benches and galleries raised a shout In a moment ten thousand persons, who crowded the great hall, replied with a still louder shout, which made the old oaken roof crack; and in another moment the innumerable throng without set up a third huzza, which was heard at Temple Bar The boats which covered the Thames gave an answering cheer A peal of gunpowder was heard on the water, and another, and another; and so, in a few moments, the glad tidings went flying past the Savoy and the Friars to London Bridge, and to the forest of masts below As the news spread, streets and squares, market-places and coffee-houses, broke forth into acclamations Yet were the acclamations less strange than the weeping For the feelings of men had been wound up to such a point that at length the stern English nature, so little used to outward signs of emotion, gave way, and thousands sobbed aloud for very joy. Meanwhile, from the outskirts of the multitude, horsemen were spurring off to bear along all the great roads intelligence of the victory of our Church and nation Yet not even that astounding explosion could awe the bitter and intrepid spirit of the Solicitor Striving to make himself heard above the din, he called on the Judges to commit those who had violated, by clamour, the dignity of a court of justice One of the rejoicing populace was seized But the tribunal felt that it would be absurd to punish a single individual for an offence common to hundreds of thousands, and dismissed him with a gentle reprimand'

Macaulay was in sympathy with his age and shared its self-complacency The other great historian of the first half of the century made his whole work a protest against that self-satisfaction.

Thomas Carlyle, 1795 1881

Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) was the son of a mason in Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire He was educated at Edinburgh University, and intended for the ministry. In 1826 he married Jane Welsh, and retired for six years to her farm at Craigenputtock, and in that period his mind developed its full powers and exhibited its true bent His chief affinity was with the philosophers and critics of

Germany, and his style was influenced by his study of German, but his tremendous personality would have forged for itself a style absolutely individual, whatever external influences it was submitted to in the course of its formation.

Historical Works

The great bulk of Carlyle's work was historical and biographical. The chief books are 'The French Revolution,' published in 1837, 'The Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell,' 1845, and 'The History of Frederick the Great,' which took fourteen years to write and was seven years in publishing (1858-1865). His historical method has not the scientific precision of to-day, but he expended unlimited industry in working up his material, in collecting, estimating, and digesting it. The results of this process are presented to the reader in a manner which, if at times eccentric, is usually effective. No English writer has a greater power of historical imagination, the power of realising the life of a past time and presenting it so that it lives again. His profound insight into character carries him further than any science of method would carry a smaller man. His arrangement and interpretation of facts is illuminating. Perhaps the quality which more than any other gives his narratives their literary value is their dramatic force. He delighted in characters who were capable by their innate greatness of dramatic action; and perhaps the chief interest of historical study to him was the opportunity it gave of appreciating and preaching the greatness of the strong man.

Criticism of Contemporary Society

Carlyle allowed himself complete freedom in his historical works of commenting unfavourably on his contemporaries. Much of his work, including his most characteristic book, 'Sartor Resartus,' was in direct criticism of the spirit of his age. He was oppressed by its commercialism. He revolted against the sordid materialism of so many of its aims. Comfort and respectability, it seemed to him, were preferred to force and originality, the social order with the 'cash-nexus' as its chief bond was little better than anarchy. He was naturally religious, though he found no satisfaction in orthodox religion, and he looked for principles and ideals in men's actions. Instead, he found shams and cant, and

he was moved by his passion for sincerity to preach in volumes that are anything but silent themselves the gospels of silence and work. His style is as rugged as his personality. It is full of strange inversions and sudden apostrophes to the reader It tries to dispense with pronouns, conjunctions, and such small fry. Strange and archaic forms and newly-coined words are common. It is emphatically not a style to copy. But it is always forcible and dramatic; and though unnatural when considered by itself, it suits exactly Carlyle's vivid and declamatory habit of thought He is a prophet, and prophets cannot body forth their message in the language of the drawing-room Almost any page of his writing would serve as an example of his style, our quotation is from the last book of 'The French Revolution':—

'What a day, once more! Women are driven out; men storm irresistibly in, choke all corridors, thunder at all gates. Deputies, putting forth head, obtest, conjure; Saint-Antoine rages, "Bread and Constitution." Report has risen that the "Convention is assassinating the women" crushing and rushing, clangor and furor! The oak doors have become as oak tambourines, sounding under the axe of Saint-Antoine; plaster-work crackles, wood-work booms and jingles; door starts up; bursts in Saint-Antoine with frenzy and vociferation, with Rag-standards, printed Proclamation, drum-music; astonishment to eye and ear Gendarmes, loyal Sectioners charge through the other door; they are recharged; musketry exploding; Saint-Antoine cannot be expelled. Obtesting Deputies obtest vainly: Respect the President; approach not the President! Deputy Féraud, stretching out his hands, baring his bosom scarred in the Spanish wars, obtests vainly; threatens and resists vainly. Rebellious Deputy of the Sovereign, if thou have fought, have not we too? We have no Bread, no Constitution! They wrench poor Féraud; they tumble him, trample him, wrath waxing to see itself work · they drag him into the corridor, dead or near it; sever his head, and fix it on a pike Ah, did an unexampled Convention want this variety of destiny, too, then? Féraud's bloody head goes on a pike Such a game has begun; Paris and the Earth may wait how it will end'

James Anthony Froude, 1818-1894

Carlyle's biographer, James Anthony Froude (1818-1894), was the third great historian of the period. Froude was one of the Oxford men who came under the influence of Newman; he was driven by the feeling of revulsion which followed Newman's

secession to Rome into an attitude of scepticism and violent opposition to the Catholic religion The results are visible in all his books. He had many faults as a historian He was prejudiced and partial. The period he chose for his great work, the History of England from the fall of Wolsey to the defeat of the Armada, was one that requires an almost impossible detachment of mind for its fair treatment, and Froude imported into his treatment of it all his violent theological partisanship This defect was emphasised by his culpable carelessness in dealing with his material He neither exhausted the sources of information open to him nor used accurately the material he did employ That he was a great historian in spite of these defects was due to his imagination and powers of expresssion Like Carlyle and Macaulay, he could by a sustained imaginative effort make a past age live again; and his prose, if it has not the perfect lucidity of Macaulay, has a good deal more force and music

John Ruskin, 1819-1900. Carlyle's was the first great protest against the materialism of Victorian England, against a theory of social relations which took the conclusions of a utilitarian political economy for ethical precepts His mantle fell upon the shoulders of John Ruskin (1829-1900) Ruskin reached his conviction of the need of a change in the English temper by a very different route from Carlyle He was the son of wealthy parents and educated at Oxford His first interest was art, and it was his study of the conditions which made great art possible that led to his reforming zeal He is perhaps the greatest art critic of England In 'Modern Painters' he examined and set forth the principles of painting with a detail and thoroughness hitherto unattempted In 'The Stones of Venice' he performed the same service for architecture But his impetuous temper makes him an unsafe guide His admiration of Turner and of the pre-Raphaelites was too unqualified, and his quarrel with Whistler shows that he was not sufficiently receptive of new ideas in art. But the value of the great bulk of his criticism is undoubted, and his influence for good on the public taste is unequalled.

The fundamental principle of Ruskin's art criticism was that art was not a thing apart from the private and public life of a nation. It was dependent on that life and essential to it. Great art could only be produced in a healthy nation, and a nation that did not produce things of beauty was not healthy. He affirmed the necessary connection of the good and the beautiful. His first quarrel with his age was that it neglected beauty, this objection soon developed into the further objection that beauty was impossible in such an age. He quarrelled with the utilitarian ideals which influenced statesmen and directed the course of social development, and beginning as an art critic he ended as a social reformer His most violent attacks were directed against the Manchester school of Liberals and their policy of laissez faire The doctrine that mere self-interest, enlightened or unenlightened, would work out unaided the solution of every social problem was to him intolerable. He called for the application of every power, public and private, till the nation was a nation of healthy and educated individuals, and he called far more urgently for a change in the national temper. He asked for a temper which did not estimate success solely by income, but by appreciating self-sacrifice became capable of great art

Social Criticism

In his writing Ruskin is dogmatic and often on the surface inconsistent His debating powers were greater than his powers of reasoning His style is one of the best examples of flamboyant prose in English It is seldom turgid, because it is always inspired by appreciation of beauty in art, nature, and man. It is rhetorical many of the later books were first delivered as lectures, but the rhetoric is great rhetoric, convincing and passionate. And the style is a wonderful instrument for purposes of invective Our example is from the chapter on 'The Nature of Gothic' in 'The Stones of Venice' —

'And now, reader, look round this English room of yours, about which you have been proud so often, because the work of it was so good and strong, and the ornaments of it so finished Examine again all those accurate mouldings and perfect polishings, and unerring adjustments of the seasoned wood and tempered steel.

Many a time you have exulted over them, and thought how great England was, because her slightest work was done so thoroughly Alas! if read rightly, these perfectnesses are signs of a slavery in our England a thousand times more bitter and more degrading than that of the scourged African, or helot Greek Men may be beaten, chained, tormented, yoked like cattle, slaughtered like summer flies, and yet remain in one sense, and the best sense, free. But to smother their souls with them, to blight and hew into rotting pollards the suckling branches of their human intelligence, to make the flesh and skin which, after the worm's work on it, is to see God, into leathern thongs to yoke machinery with,—this is to be slave-masters indeed; and there might be more freedom in England, though her feudal lords' lightest words were worth men's lives, and though the blood of the vexed husbandman dropped in the furrows of her fields, than there is while the animation of her multitudes is sent like fuel to feed the factory smoke, and the strength of them is given daily to be wasted into the fineness of a web, or racked into the exactness of a line.'

Matthew Arnold as Critic

Ruskin attacked the self-complacency of Victorian England from the point of view of a lover of beauty and a social reformer. A quieter but equally effective attack was made on it by Matthew Arnold As a prose writer Arnold is important in two capacities, first as a great literary critic, and secondly as a censor of the English middle classes. His poetry, and his theory of poetry, show the importance he attached to the continual study of the great poets. In his critical essays he exemplifies the value of such study, bringing a mind formed by it to bear on the problem of estimating the value of recent and contemporary writers In the domain of literary criticism he did as much to establish principles and educate taste as did Ruskin in that of art criticism

And his criticism like Ruskin's had a moral purpose He regarded culture—the habit of seeking and meditating on all that was greatest in the literature of past ages—as the most important influence in living the good life And he found that his contemporaries ignored this culture, they were, in the phrase he made current, 'Philistines,' and their lives consequently were lacking in 'sweetness and light.' In his 'Essays in Criticism' (1865), in occasional essays published after, and in a series of books which had

for their object the substitution of an undogmatic for a dogmatic Christianity, he preached this gospel. His delicate satire and delightful humour made his teaching effective and saved him from the charge of priggishness. His prose has the qualities he himself lays down as needful for a fit prose, 'regularity, uniformity, precision, balance', and it has besides the vivifying touch of individuality which makes a style As an example we may quote a few lines from his preface to Ward's 'English Poets'.—

'More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry Science, I say, will appear incomplete without it. For finely and truly does Wordsworth call poetry "the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science", and what is a countenance without an expression? Again, Wordsworth finely and truly calls poetry "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge"; our religion, parading evidences such as those on which the popular mind relies now; our philosophy, pluming itself on its reasonings about causation and finite and infinite being, what are they but the shadows and dreams and false shows of knowledge? The day will come when we shall wonder at ourselves for having trusted to them, for having taken them seriously; and the more we perceive their hollowness, the more we shall prize "the breath and finer spirit of knowledge" offered to us by poetry.'

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